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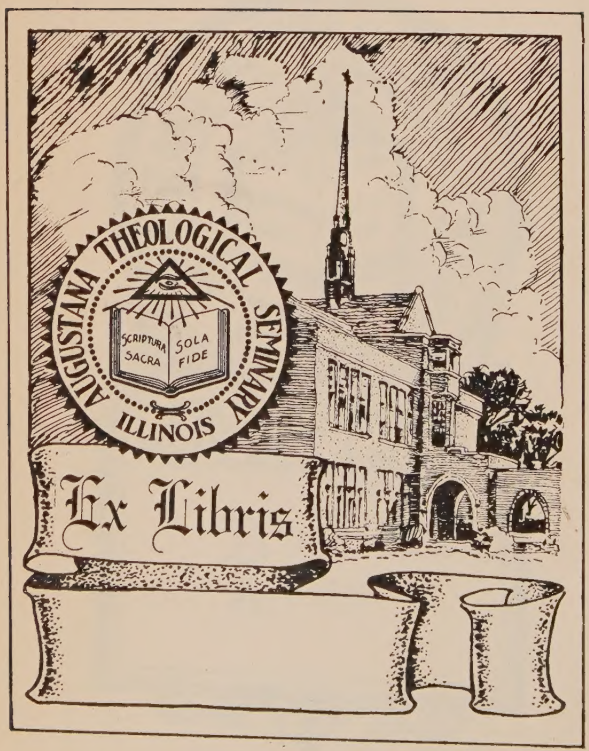
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THE

PHILOSOPHY OF BELIEF

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF BELIEF

OR

LAW IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

BY

THE DUKE OF ARGYLL

K.G., K.T.

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PREFACE

THIS work is the concluding volume of a series which began with *The Reign of Law* published in 1866, and which was continued in *The Unity of Nature* published in 1884. Although each of these works may stand independently by itself, they are yet very closely connected. They represent, in the main, one line of thought on the greatest of all subjects, namely, the philosophy of religion in its relations with the philosophy of science. The first of these treatises, *The Reign of Law*, dealt with the question how far the idea is rational that physical laws are the supreme agencies in Nature, or whether, on the contrary, Mind and Will are seated on that universal throne. The second of the series, *The Unity of Nature*, starting from a fresh point of view, dealt mainly with the problem how far our human faculties are competent, on this matter, to give us any knowledge whatever, or whether they must leave us in conscious, yet helpless, and hopeless, ignorance on the whole of it, and on all that it involves. The third and last endeavour of the series—the present

volume—applies the reasonings and conclusions which have been thus reached, to an examination of the relation in which the great conception of Natural Law, when properly understood, stands to religion in general, and to Christian theology in particular.

If the preface of a book is to be of any use at all, it must supply the reader with some relevant information which is not to be found in the book itself. On such a subject as that here dealt with, there is no subsidiary information so relevant as the direction from which the author has himself approached it. Sometimes, this may be of real importance to the understanding of an argument, or, at least, to the appreciation of its place and value in connexion with contemporary thought. I am induced, therefore, to give some personal explanations which otherwise might well appear to be uninteresting or superfluous.

Neither in theology, nor in philosophy, have I ever had any scholastic training. A very quiet country home was the only scene of my education. I was born and entirely brought up in Scotland—never having even crossed the English border until the fourteenth year of my age in 1836. In the death of my mother, before I was five years old, I lost the source from which most men receive their earliest impressions of religion. My father[1], although he had a very

[1] Then Lord John Campbell. Succeeded his brother in 1839 as seventh Duke of Argyll. Died in 1847.

reverent mind, was not a theologian, and such religious instruction as I received, under his arrangements, was entirely in connexion with the usual teaching of the Established Church of Scotland. It was altogether simple and uncontroversial, for although all my early tutors were men preparing for the ministry of that Church, yet in the matter of catechisms I was mercifully dealt with. In that tremendous document which is called the Shorter Catechism I had but a very partial drilling, with the result that the first question and answer—certainly one of the noblest in all the documents of systematic theology—has alone survived at the call of memory[1]. For the rest, plain Bible reading, and the ordinary collections of sacred poetry, together with the usual Sunday services in the church, were the whole of my earliest education in theology, so far as outward influences were concerned.

Nevertheless, amidst such quiet surroundings of external circumstance, events occurred in my boyhood which moved in me a somewhat wakeful, and

[1] *Question.* What is the chief end of man.
Answer. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever.

This catechism was drawn up by the Westminster Assembly of Divines in 1647, and, with the Confession drawn up by the same body, was soon after adopted by the General Assembly of the Established Church of Scotland. It differs, however, widely from the old native Confession of the Reformation epoch, and was expressly assented to only, or mainly, in pursuit of that *ignis fatuus* of the time—uniformity of worship throughout the three kingdoms.

perhaps precocious, activity of the speculative reason. Those events were not local only. During the ten or twelve years following 1823, the date of my birth, there was, as is well known, a general movement of thought among all the Churches in these islands in sympathy with, or in antagonism to, corresponding political agitations. That movement took very different directions in England and in Scotland. In England its most notable result was the rise of the Oxford school. In Scotland it was less definite, and in general less purely theological. But it intensified differences of tendency within the national Church which had long existed, and which ultimately led to the great secession, commonly called the Disruption, in 1843.

It was in the middle of this critical period of years that the quiet and then remote parish of my home on the Firth of Clyde[1] suddenly became the very centre and focus of a theological controversy, and of a religious persecution, which drew the attention of the whole of Scotland. In 1825 the parish living had become vacant, and a young minister was appointed[2] who soon became a power. With a naturally acute and discriminating intellect, he combined a nature full of love to men—an absorbing devotion to the honour and to the credit among them, of Christian truth—and all the personal attrac-

[1] The parish of Row (pronounced Rue) in Dumbartonshire.
[2] By the patron, my uncle, George seventh Duke of Argyll.

tions of a most saintly character. He soon found, or thought he found, the real doctrines of Christianity, on some points of cardinal importance, to be seriously misconceived and misrepresented in the popular theology of the time. How right he was in this conviction, can be best appreciated by those who have seen the changes of feeling and of opinion which have since been brought about. Long before his death his name had become one of the most honoured names in Scotland. The University of Glasgow conferred upon him the degree of D.D. His principal work has attained the rank of a standard treatise on the most difficult of all theological subjects[1], and has had a wide influence, not in Scotland only, but also in England. The beauty of its spirit is no small recommendation of the truthfulness of its doctrine. If the average teaching of the pulpit, now, upon that, and some kindred subjects, is indeed very different from the same teaching sixty-five years ago, that difference is largely due to the influence exercised by this young minister of my native parish. It is not that any tenet has been formally abandoned. It is not, even, that any one has been formally amended. It is that, on some doctrines, nothing is now quite the same. Things often said in sermons then, are never said in our days[2]; whilst old words and phrases, which cannot be laid aside, are used in a better sense

[1] *On the Nature of the Atonement* (Macmillan). This work is now in its sixth edition.

[2] I have alluded in this volume to an example at p. 354.

and in a larger spirit. The points on which he attacked the popular theology, might seem to many, as they actually did seem, to lie in the region of the most transcendental psychology and metaphysics. But, in reality, through a thousand open and inevitable avenues of thought, they touched some of the most fundamental conceptions, not only of Christianity, but of all religion. They touched the character of the Godhead, the nature of man, and the only possible conditions of true worship, or of acceptable sacrifice. His deep and spiritual views did not agree with those of either of the older parties in his Church. Full of prejudice and of misconception, they both combined against him, and after a gallant struggle on his part of some six years' duration, his teaching was condemned as heretical, and he was finally deposed from the ministry by the supreme ecclesiastical Court, the General Assembly, in 1831.

I was far too young to understand that controversy at the time. I recollect nothing but sermons of inordinate length, and, in the congregation, some hard, watching, criticizing faces, that had none of the fine spiritual light which even a child could appreciate in the preacher's gentle and thoughtful countenance. But although the battle raged outside, it never entered within, the walls of the household in which I lived. The kinswoman who kept my father's house when he became a widower, was an earnest disciple of the reforming minister—without, however, any tendency to

disputation on the subject. But the human mind has a strange property of receiving, and keeping, vague general impressions of which it is quite unconscious at the moment. There is, moreover, a still more strange phenomenon connected with its working, and that is the widespread prevalence at particular times, of some general tendency, or atmosphere, of thought in which seeds, long latent, are everywhere suddenly and simultaneously developed. I cannot say how early it was that I became fully conscious of the difficulties, both intellectual and moral, which beset the acceptance of such theological doctrines and ideas as those which had aroused the reforming energies of Mr. John McLeod Campbell. But I know that it was very early indeed. A spirit of wonder, and a tendency to speculative inquiry—to cross-question every verbal proposition—were innate elements in my mental constitution. I think, too, that in very early years, I was conscious of the great difference between such propositions when they merely transcend the reason, and when they confound, or contradict, it. The notion of ideas in themselves irrational, and still more of others which violate the moral sense, being insisted upon as parts of religious faith, was always to me a notion most painful and distressing.

Meanwhile, the physical sciences had begun their training. Geology was then making some of its most rapid strides. One of my father's intimate friends was

Mr. James Smith of Jordanhill, who first discovered the glacial shell-beds of the Clyde area—a discovery raising many questions which still await solution. In his yacht and under his guidance I was first initiated into the beauty and the interest of marine zoology—a branch of science then in its infancy, but one which has now assumed the highest rank in biology. The splendid work lately done in the Reports of the Challenger Expedition, by my friend Dr. John Murray, is indeed a marvellous development of that which I saw begun in 1838 by Mr. Smith. But he saw the wide bearing of it on the problems of organic life. His mind was thoroughly scientific, and embraced a wide range of investigation. His nautical and geographical treatise on the Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul, recorded in the twenty-seventh chapter of Acts, is one of the most interesting contributions to the historical evidences of the Apostolic narrative, and as such was republished a few years ago by the late Bishop (Goodwin) of Durham. A curious and most interesting paper on the 'Ships of the Ancients,' and another on the difficult subject of the connexion between the Synoptic Gospels, were examples of his rapid and sagacious intellectual activity.

The spirit and conversation of this oldest and earliest friend, reinforced all the tendencies of my own home. I had myself an intense love of external Nature, and especially of ornithology; and this led me, by an accidental concurrence of cir-

cumstances, to the habitual contemplation of some special problems which rise out of the region of mere science to the higher levels of philosophy. My father had a keen interest in every branch of physical inquiry, but his favourite pursuit was mechanics. Only a very few years before, he had seen steam-navigation rise, and become established, on the waters which spread beneath the windows of his ancient castle. I have often heard him describe the hideous noises made by the rude machinery of the first steamboat started by James Bell—noises so loud that it was difficult to hear conversation on the deck. He was himself a very highly skilled workman, making with his own hands many beautiful articles in wood, in ivory, and in metals. The most perfect workmanship was with him a passion—joinings close to a hair-breadth, surfaces of perfect smoothness, structures strong and solid for any work they were designed to do. He used to boast that this was characteristic generally of British handiwork, as compared with the flimsier and less trustworthy productions of foreign producers. Then, from the mechanics of human invention, he passed, by an easy and natural transition, to the vast subject of organic or animal mechanics, and especially fixed his attention on the highest and most typical example of the principles involved in them, namely, the machinery of flight. Thus I was brought, first, to appreciate the mystery and the wonder of the results; and then, secondly, taught to consider

how those results were mechanically achieved. The final cause—that is to say, the purpose—of a wing was obvious. It was the function, or the power, of flight. The proximate causes of that power in the working of adapted structures, were almost infinitely complicated and obscure. I well recollect hearing one of the most distinguished men who have held the chair of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, the late J. D. Forbes, afterwards Principal of the University of St. Andrews, declare that to him the theory of flight was one of the most inscrutable of all problems, so that he was sometimes inclined to regard it as approaching the miraculous. He knew, he said, that it must be done, somehow, by the 'resolution of forces,' but how 'resolved' he could not understand. Yet the confidence that these proximate causes were discoverable by careful investigation and reasoning—that, somehow, purely material or physical laws were the mere servants and instruments of intention and contrivance, was a confidence that was absolute and unconditional. I was accustomed to hear it explained how weight, or gravitation, which seemed the insuperable difficulty to be overcome, was compelled, in spite of itself, to be one main agent in enabling heavy bodies to accomplish, in thin air, the most easy and beautiful evolutions. I was accustomed to hear this great triumph of Purpose, traced and explained through the finest mechanisms, not only in the bodies of birds—not only in the structure of the whole

wing—but in the position and structure, also, of each, and of all its separate feathers. I was accustomed to hear this exquisite mechanism contrasted with the stupidity of men in vainly trying to utilize the inert buoyancy of balloons. Thus the great doctrine of the intelligibility of Nature, and of the certain truth of our (so-called) 'anthropomorphic' explanations of the creative Mind, was a doctrine borne in upon my convictions with even more power than it is embedded in the universal instincts and language of mankind. Indeed, it was, with me, not so much a doctrine as a Presence. It never appeared to me to be any mere inference, or the result of an argument of any kind, however linked and strong. It was an integral part of the observed phenomena, and a direct object of perception.

But, obviously, this was a confidence which extended farther. The correspondence between the Intelligence of man and the structure of the Universe, could not stop where mechanical explanations ended. It must extend to higher things. The wings of thought must be as much an adjusted mechanism as the wings of flight. This was an idea which justified and encouraged some kinds of doubt, whilst it acted as a powerful solvent upon others. On the one hand, it encouraged and justified a reasonable scepticism on every dogma of the schools which is really obnoxious to the instructed reason, or to the enlightened conscience. On the other hand, it put an end to that

bottomless distrust of all thought, and of all reasoning upon spiritual things, which is, as it were, a suicide of the soul.

For more than sixty years the consequences and developments of this conception have been the constant subject of my meditations—in its innumerable relations to science, to philosophy, to politics, and to religion. On all of these subjects I have read a good deal, and thought a great deal more, taking a special pleasure in biology and metaphysics. The many losses which a man must encounter—losses of which I am often painfully conscious—who has never been at either school or college, may have some considerable compensations. An attitude, indeed, of isolation on subjects which have exercised the most powerful intellects since the world began, can only be an attitude of ignorance and presumption. But, on the other hand, a certain detachment from schools and parties, and from the hero-worship so natural to the enthusiasms of youth at times and places of great intellectual excitement, may be a positive advantage —provided, always, that the mind is kept continually in living contact with Nature, and with books. My father's horror of slovenly workmanship in mechanics, has served me in good stead. I have been led to the same horror of it in the workmanship of the intellect —in the management of the reason—and especially in the use of language. An early initiation into the principles of chemical analysis, has been a most helpful

weapon in fighting those 'spectres of the mind' which will always haunt the exercise of reflective thought. It has impressed upon me the conviction that most of the difficulties and fallacies into which men fall, are due largely to bad analysis in the observation of facts—to bad analysis in the recording of them—and, especially, to still worse analysis in the abstracts of them which are used in reasoning.

I have said so much in order to assure my readers that I have not approached the subject of this book from any mere formal, or dogmatic, point of view. Dogma, indeed, I believe to be valuable and even necessary—meaning by dogma some careful definitions of the objects of belief. But personal observation and experience of a remarkable time, did very early bring home to my mind how liable such definitions are to survive the right interpretation of them, and even how liable they are to minister, through the ambiguities and poverties of language, to the most degraded misunderstanding of divine things.

I should like my readers to know that the author of the three treatises of which this is the last, is one who has known what religious difficulties are, and who has not seldom suffered from them. I doubt if there is any one of them which has not occurred to me. Each individual mind has its own separate temptations and infirmities. Canon Gore has lately given to the world an autobiographic and detailed account of the processes of thought through which

a very distinguished man of science—the late Dr. George Romanes—was led first to abandon Christianity, then to take up for years the attitude of an aggressive agnosticism, and lastly, by the exercise of pure reason, to see the fallacy of his own negative conclusions, and to die in the declared Christian faith which for years he had forsaken [1]. A more instructive book has not been published for a long time. As I had been led into some controversies with this ardent apostle of what is called the Philosophy of Evolution, I had occasion to see his genuine sincerity, candour, and love of truth—qualities which give the highest interest and value to this self-recorded history of his changed opinions. I do not think that, at any time, I could have been captivated by the purely verbal dialectics, or logomachies, which Mr. Romanes had so long allowed to hold in bondage alike his intellect and his heart. But I have often been sensible of other intellectual temptations and weaknesses which, if indulged, must end in universal scepticism. No man who retains the use of all his faculties, can be satisfied with this result, or can fail to feel that it is the product of nothing but atrophy or disease. I have some confidence that the reasoning pursued, however inadequately, in this volume may be of use to others—as it has been to myself. I am the more hopeful of this since the first of these treatises, *The Reign of Law*,

[1] *Thoughts on Religion*, by the late G. J. Romanes, LL.D.; edited by Canon Gore, M.A., 1895.

in which the line of argument was first developed, has had a very wide circulation at home, with a still larger circulation in America; and, so far as I know, it has never been met by any attempt at refutation or reply. Letters from the most distant parts of the English-speaking world, from men whom I have never seen or can see, have assured me of the help it has been to them in grasping what *The Reign of Law*, in its true conception, really means. Nor have I been deterred from pursuing the same line of thought into the region of theology by the circumstance that my implied intention of so doing at some future time[1] was long ago taken up by Professor Drummond, and executed—on lines, however, very different from mine—in a work which has had, I believe, a larger circulation than my own. The subject is so complicated and so immense that it may be dealt with from many different points of view,—and, I may add,—so immense that no man who tries to deal with it, can fail to be most painfully impressed by the fragmentary character of his own best endeavours to explore it.

One word farther I ought to say. Some who read this book will probably find that one or another of the doctrines of Christianity—or at least one or more aspects of Christian doctrine—upon which, perhaps, they may place the highest value, are either slightly touched, or are altogether omitted. I must ask such readers not to draw, from this circumstance, any

[1] In the Preface to *The Reign of Law*.

conclusions as to my own opinions concerning these omitted subjects. Such conclusions would often be quite erroneous, because one great object which I have kept steadily in view, has been to avoid, in so far as I possibly could do so, entering on questions in dispute between different sections of the Christian Church. But this aim has of necessity led to silence, either partial or complete, on several points of immense interest and importance.

ARGYLL.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF BELIEF

OR

LAW IN THEOLOGY

Chapter I.

INTUITIVE THEOLOGY.

ITS DEFINITIONS AND THEIR RESULTS.

The first demand made upon us in any discussion touching the philosophy of religion, is to define the meaning of the word Nature. On the one hand, the use of it is indispensable. On the other hand, the abuses of it are inveterate. We shall soon find that there is no possible definition which does not condemn the thoughtless assumptions involved in that distinction, which has become common only in modern times, between what we loosely call the Natural and the Supernatural. This is no question of opinion. It is purely a question of definition. In the classical philosophies the word Nature played a great part. But in them it certainly did not mean physical phenomena alone, nor even any mere aggregate of these taken as a whole. On the contrary, it meant some universal agency which was

conceived as lying behind and above all phenomena. To that agency mental characteristics were habitually ascribed, and all the elements that constitute personality. Thus, for example, Cicero expressly says that as we cannot say without impiety that anything is superior to universal Nature, we must confess that divine reason is contained within her [1]. In this, and in many other utterances of Greek and Roman thinkers, it is evident not only that there was no antithesis in their minds between what are now called the Natural and the Supernatural, but even that Nature, with them, did most especially mean some universal although invisible Personality — a sense closely corresponding with that which is now treated as if it were a conception wholly distinct, if not alien, from that of Nature. But there is no possibility of defending any such distinction. It is true, indeed, that there is a distinction obvious to us all, between mind and matter—between a mental faculty and a physical force—although even here the close, and apparently inseparable, connexion between these two great categories, in all living creatures, is as obvious as their broad distinctions. There is also, in our eyes at least, a wide and palpable distinction between the Organic and the Inorganic—between the Living and the Not-living—between a mere physical force, or any number of physical forces considered in themselves, and those combinations of them, in living creatures, by which so many things are done, and of which the world is full.

[1] Cicero, *De Legibus*, Bk. ii. 7.

All these distinctions are intelligible enough. But those things between which they distinguish, are all alike comprehended within the great system which we call Nature. The word has no meaning at all except as a name for the sum of all existences visible and invisible. Nature includes not only the mind of man with all its works, but also whatever other and higher Mind there may be, of which his is but an emanation or a fragment. No other definition is possible for any of us who are capable of analyzing the contents of our own thoughts and the meaning of our own words. The clear and calm intellect of Bishop Butler was impatient under the fallacies that harboured in the 'confused and undetermined' senses in which men use the words nature and natural[1]. In one of the most memorable of his writings he did a good deal to unravel the confusions he complained of[2]. In our own time J. S. Mill has submitted the word Nature to a rigorous and complete analysis[3]. He rightly treats this analysis as an essential preliminary to any discussion on the philosophy of religion. He shows that in the proper sense 'Nature is a collective name for everything that is.' It means 'the sum of all phenomena with the causes which produce them.' Moreover, it includes 'not only all that happens, but all that is capable of happening.' He declares that 'the unused capability of causes is as much a part of the idea of Nature as those which take effect.' This definition cannot be gainsaid. Every logician must admit its truth.

[1] *Analogy*, Pt. I, chap. i. [2] *Sermon II on Human Nature.*
[3] *Three Essays on Religion.* No. I, Nature.

A much more recent author has adopted it in nearly the same words. 'For myself, I am bound to say,' writes Mr. Huxley, 'that the term "Nature" covers the totality of that which is[1].' Yet this is clearly a definition which reduces the word 'supernatural' to nonsense. There can be nothing outside the totality of existence. Moreover, even as we commonly employ it, the word 'nature' has no boundary. And even if we could think of it as having a boundary, we are all conscious that no more than a mere fraction of its contents, even inside that boundary, is known to us. But it is obviously impossible to say of any agency that it is outside of, or above, Nature, unless we know all that what we call Nature does actually include. And assuredly any assumption that the system of things in which we live does not include any mind or will except our own, is a negative assumption as inconsistent with the universal impressions of mankind, as it is incompatible with science. The laws which science traces are, as we have seen[2], essentially laws of mind—intelligible to our intelligence, and recognized by it, only because of their close relation to its own powers and to its own perceptions.

There is, however, a real distinction of immense importance to be observed in this matter, which has been much forgotten, or has lain wholly unobserved. It is one thing to say that, as a fact, Nature is full of some mind which is other and higher than our own, although having some close analogies with it, whilst it

[1] *Essays on Controverted Subjects*, p. 35.
[2] *Reign of Law*, passim; and *Unity of Nature*.

is quite another thing to say that in Nature, including ourselves, we can search out that other mind, as regards its seat, its character, or its ultimate relations to the general system under which we live. So much as we can ever discover on these farther questions, from visible and external things alone, or from the character and constitution of our own minds, is only to be reached in the form of inference—of inference, too, beset with many intellectual difficulties, and not a few perplexities even of a moral kind. But as regards the mere existence in Nature of the essential qualities of mind, as distinguished from the qualities of matter and of the physical forces, it is demonstrable that the ubiquitous presence of this higher agency is not a matter of inference alone, but is an object of direct and immediate recognition by the highest mental faculties—which are the highest senses—we possess. It is a pure matter of fact, as susceptible of proof as any other fact, that the human mind, looking into Nature, sees, in all the phenomena of the world, a great deal which is obviously of its own kind and quality.

The most striking proof of this fact is to be found in the automatic action of the mind, whether popular or scientific, as recorded in the growth, in the significance, and in the use, of human speech. Much has been said and written on the fallacies due to language. But much too little has been seen or thought of the stores of wisdom and knowledge which are often hid under our forms of articulate expression. Yet this is really an all-important thought. As a matter of fact men find it quite impossible to describe natural pheno-

mena, and their laws, without using the language of mind in a thousand ways. This is all the more remarkable since so many of them have taken to trying very hard to do so. But they always fail. The failure is to be seen in two characteristic indications—either in the continual and unconscious relapse into the language of purpose and intention, or, on the other hand, in the resort to forms of expression which omit altogether to take any notice of some of the most important facts in the phenomena which Nature presents, and which it is their duty—and professedly, at least, their endeavour—faithfully to report. Of this last result—that, namely, of scamping the work of the full and adequate description of natural phenomena in order to keep clear of the language of design—I have given some striking examples in a former volume[1]. But the other result—that, namely, of using the language of design freely, for the purposes of description, without any conscious perception whatever of its significance in philosophy—is much the most usual result. This arises from the fact that there are comparatively few men who deliberately set themselves to exclude from their account of facts, or from their definition of natural laws, features which are the most conspicuous as well as the most important of all. Mr. Herbert Spencer, indeed, does set himself to this attempt as an essential part of his philosophy, and we see an example of the consequence in the phrases he has invented, to express the essence of the wonderful changes which are characteristic in the development of organic life.

[1] *Unity of Nature*, ch. viii.

Probably no words which have ever been chosen for the expression of human thought are so empty of adequate or appropriate meaning for the true description of the facts of organic development as the words he has chosen for this purpose. He calls the wondrous evolution of organic forms a progress from 'homogeneity to heterogeneity.' But to this we shall return.

In the meantime let us observe that the great majority of writers on physical science, take no special pains to eliminate such ideas, or such words, expressive of purpose, as they may feel it to be necessary to employ for the full description of the facts they have to deal with. And it is most instructive to observe how charged their language constantly and consequently is with the recognition of purpose and design. Darwin, as I have elsewhere shown[1], never takes the least trouble to avoid this language; and, as he himself told me in conversation, the presence of these mental elements in organic development, was often borne in upon him with overwhelming force, although at other times, he added, it seemed to vanish from before his eyes. Nor is this surprising. As regards all its higher theological accompaniments, and its developments into religious belief, it is very easy and very natural to forget the indelible impression which Nature makes upon us of the existence of some omnipresent mind. But all these supplementary conceptions of theology constitute a subject quite separable from the simple recognition of mind as an elementary and a fundamental fact in the economy of Nature. It is

[1] *Reign of Law*, ch. i. pp. 37–50 (fifth edition).

quite as impossible, for example, to describe, fully and in detail, the structure of a bird's wing, and of each individual feather in the series of its quills, without referring to the whole as an apparatus for sustaining flight, as it would be to describe a steam-engine fully, without any reference to the fact that it is an apparatus for driving a wheel, or a paddle, or a screw. The subserviency of structure to function, and the priority in time of structural growth to the actual or possible discharge of structural function, are not only facts, but they are the dominant facts in the whole organic world; and the inevitable result is that in them the human mind is compelled to recognize the invariable law of preparation, of prevision, of development in time—not by use, but for use—when it seeks to find an adequate expression for its own direct perceptions in the science of Biology.

Some scientific writers now speak with great contempt of the tendency to personify the physical forces and phenomena of Nature, and declare this tendency to be the origin and explanation of all theological conceptions. In a sense this may be true. But it only throws us back upon the question as to the origin and the significance of this universal tendency of the human mind to personify the agencies of Nature. Whence came it, and what does it mean? Is it indeed an universal tendency, or is it confined to minds in a rude condition of primitive ignorance or superstition? This last is the suggestion of those who denounce it. Yet these very men are themselves continually inventing new phrases and forms of expres-

sion which are essentially personifications, and depend entirely on that element of meaning for all the plausibility they profess. 'Natural selection' is an obvious example. In this phrase Nature is supposed to act as a pigeon-fancier acts in so breeding his favourite birds as to produce varieties with specially developed powers or aspects. The whole attractiveness of the phrase, and the whole aptitude it has shown for being used in a great variety of senses, and as accounting for a great variety of accomplished results, depends upon this analogy between the working of 'Nature' as a personification and the personal working of a breeder of stock. This sort of language, therefore, from which men cannot escape, even when they try hardest to do so, would not seem to be the result of any mere ignorant fancy by which we project ourselves into external Nature, but is evidently the result of an instinctive recognition of that special kind of agency which is, indeed, familiarly known to us as existing within ourselves, but which is also universally recognized and identified as existing outside of us, and around us, on every side. It is a reflection of that infinite Reason—that 'Logos'—of which we partake, and without which in Nature 'was not anything made that was made.' All things, including ourselves, are full of it. It cannot be excluded, or even put aside, and yet it cannot be directly or farther known otherwise than as an indisputable existence, not less pervading than it is mysterious.

But there is another very curious witness to the universal perception of this existence of mind as an

ingredient in all adequate descriptions of Nature, and especially of organic forms, besides the constant reference to it involved in such instinctive phrases as 'exquisite adaptations' or 'beautiful contrivances.' And curiously enough this other witness is brought forward by the very arguments which are sometimes used to condemn what are called teleological explanations. There are some minds which, under the influence of a modern phase of thought, are repelled by the very idea of design in Nature. They feel as if it were an idea founded exclusively on our own human consciousness, and on the narrow limitation of our powers. They cannot think of the final causes in Nature as acting under like limitations as to space and time, or as to any of the powers and opportunities which are so conditioned. They feel as if it were an unworthy notion of any supposed divine Power that it should be likened to some great artificer making things on the same principle on which we are compelled to make them, in order to effect our purposes. This aspect of the subject is quite intelligible, but obviously it is one which has no tendency to exclude the abstract conception of mind as omnipresent in Nature. On the contrary, it usually takes the form of representing the human idea of contrivance and design as involving unworthy and inadequate conceptions of a mind, which is regarded as, somehow, so supreme as to be above such necessities of what we call mechanical contrivance and invention. These, it is thought, involve the idea of limitations, whereas it is farther thought, we cannot suppose the existence of

any limitations on a really Supreme Will. Such suggestions are not unnatural. There is no other objection to them than this consideration—that our recognition of mind must be determined by its recognizable qualities as known to us, and that we must accept the evidence of manifestations which are unmistakable. Our speculative faculties are altogether untrustworthy on such subjects, when they try to soar into regions with no atmosphere of knowledge to sustain their wings. Apart from facts, they have no foothold in the courts of truth. It is a certain fact, and not a fancy, that in Nature all things are done by the use of appropriate means, and by the subordination of material structures to future work and function. Why it should be so is quite another question. That is a question which rises into the domain of theology, properly so called —that is to say, it belongs to the category of questions touching the ultimate character and qualities of the mind which is obviously concerned in the phenomena of Nature. But we are now speaking simply of mind in itself—of mental phenomena as distinguished from the blind and mechanical action of the physical forces. We may wonder, and we must wonder, why it is that the mental characteristics which we recognize in the works of Nature should be so very like our own in some of its features; and yet, on the other hand, it may well occur to us that if the mind that we see in Nature were wholly and absolutely unlike our own, we should have no means of recognizing it at all, and we may well surmise that such likeness as we do see, may be the result of

attributes which are inseparable from the whole constitution of the Universe and of its Author.

There is, however, one great and obvious difference between our own works and the works of Nature, which may perhaps suggest to us the possibility of a corresponding difference in the methods of causation. And this difference may reconcile our speculative notions of a Supreme Power with the observed facts of that Power working in a way that seems so much too like our own. That difference lies in the distinction between making and creating, or, in other words, between development and manufacture. The last of these two methods—the method of manufacture—is always our way of making things. The first of these two methods, namely, that of growth or development, is the universal method of Nature in all her works. We make things by a visible handling from the outside, as it were, of matter and of the material forces. In Nature all things are made, as it appears to us, by an absolute taking possession of matter and of the material forces, and by endowing them, as it were, with an indwelling subordination and obedience. Yet, if we examine closely the operation of our own minds, we shall come to the conclusion that the ultimate seat and centre of design, even in ourselves, lies behind and above the processes of manufacture, and is really as invisible and as inaccessible to a full understanding of it as it is in external Nature. With us the act of conceiving a design is a purely mental act—independent, so far as we can feel or see, of time, or space, or of any external

matter. This is creation, or comes as near to it as our faculties enable us to think of it at all. It is only when we come to the execution of the design—to the embodiment of it in outward form—that the difference arises so conspicuously between our methods and the methods of external Nature. We have to use our hands laboriously in preparing materials, in shaping them, in combining them, in running them into moulds, and when all the bits of a mechanism have been so prepared, we have to put them together in the necessary adjustments. In Nature all this kind of visible and external handwork, is superseded. But nothing else is superseded. The combinations and adjustments in themselves, are not superseded; on the contrary, they are always conspicuous, and the highest and most satisfactory investigations of science consist in nothing else than in the tracing and identification of them. But they are brought about and effected in a manner widely different from the only manner in which we can work our way to analogous results. We cannot get matter and the physical forces to obey us except by an external handling. Our minds cannot be immanent in them. We cannot get, as it were, inside of them, so as to inspire them, as it would almost seem, with the spirit of an absolute and passive obedience. Yet, none the less, in the primary work of conceiving any design, in setting it up in the mind's eye, in imagining it, and, it may almost be said, in seeing it as it is to be when clothed in form, we feel as independent of matter as are the designs which we recognize in Nature.

The history of all great human conceptions and designs, whether in the fields of literature, or of art, or of mechanical invention, are full of examples in which we see and feel this great distinction between the purely mental work, and the later and lower work of handling and shaping matter. All great buildings, some of which have raised and inspired the human mind for centuries, have been so conceived—from the vast cathedrals which lift their arches amidst the busy haunts of men, to the lovely temples which, in the wastes of Paestum or Girgente, still impress us with a sense of majesty and repose. Nay, there may be, and there are, other designs of the same kind, but greater, which have never been embodied in any material form at all, because of the immense distance which separates, in us, between mental and material constructions. I am myself in possession of a striking example. My friend, the late Mr. James Nasmyth, the inventor of the steam-hammer—an instrument which has had immense consequences in extending the power of man over all the work which steam alone can do—was a great mechanic, and he was able to embody his imaginings in material forms of adjusted structure. But he was also, in conception, a mighty architect. He once conceived the design of a Castle of Otranto, and drew the design in outline. It is a superb creation. Lofty walls, with endless towers and turrets, crown the summits of a great precipice, and impress upon the mind the ideas at once of impregnable strength, and of such power as could need no defence. The work of actually erecting

such a castle would require an army of men, almost such as that which built the pyramids of Egypt, and for as long a time. But it would have required more than this, in the work needed to embody the forms of beauty with which its details abounded. Yet in Nasmyth's mind this magnificent design rose as a sudden inspiration, and even the comparatively slight work of tracing its outlines on paper was as separate from the mental operation, as intellect and imagination are separate from the materials of pen, ink, and paper, or of wood, and stone, and lime. The same profound distinction is illustrated in the story of his celebrated mechanical invention of the steam-hammer. He has often told me that the idea flashed upon him suddenly and in a moment when he was at tea. He was so absolutely certain of its material practicability and of its mechanical success, that he at once drew up the specification and wrote instructions for a patent. James Watt's still more celebrated conception of the separate condenser in the steam-engine, is another example of the same kind, except that in this case there was a much longer way to be travelled in getting the required command over materials, and over difficulties of mere mechanical construction. In all these cases, and in a thousand others, the difference and distinction between the conceiving mind and the mere artificer is a difference as wide as exists between any two things cognizible by our intelligence. In Nature this distinction vanishes. That which does not vanish, however, but becomes, on the contrary, supreme and solitary in its reality, are all those

highest functions of mind which consist in the conceiving of results, and in the absolute command over the means of attaining them which is incomprehensible to us. It is the artificer, with his laborious work, who disappears, not the designer occupying the throne of ultimate conception and of effective causation. The very idea of an artificer disappears in Nature, only because there are no materials which seem to be refractory in the hands of that mind which is so supreme —no weights too heavy to be lifted, no forms of matter which will not yield their elementary substances to design except under conditions which it is difficult or impossible to secure. In Nature the elements of matter — analyzed — dissociated — selected — can, in some cases, be actually seen rushing, through prepared channels, to take their appointed place in the building up of new organic structures, controlled and guided by some invisible force, or impulse, entirely different from any which we can yoke to our service. But this difference does not alter in the least the obvious relation of the results to all that we recognize as mind.

The same principle appears throughout the whole region of animal mechanics and of organic chemistry. Let us take a single example out of an endless list. Some substances are capable of exerting a powerful chemical action in decomposing others. But the separation of compounded elements is an essential step towards re-combination in new forms. All organic creatures need food; but food consists in matter decomposed in such a way as to afford facilities for re-combination. Now, it is a law of chemical action

that in order to be made easy and rapidly effectual, it must be allowed opportunity and advantage, and that for this purpose the substance to be decomposed must be so broken up, or ground down mechanically, that its particles shall be well exposed to the decomposing agent. For this purpose, therefore, the raw materials of food must be so treated. It is for this end that teeth, or some equivalent weapons with muscles to work them, have to be provided. When we have to gain the same end, which is a constant necessity in every laboratory, we have to use the pestle and mortar to triturate, and grind down, the material which we wish to decompose. This is a mechanical operation. It is the work of a mere artificer. But in Nature the triturating apparatus grows, or is developed, with the very germ of the organism which needs it—but always before the need arises. And thus, we can see, and be absolutely sure, that it is *for* use, and not *by* use, that it is developed. Some foreseeing of that which is to come, presides over the whole operation. Provision always is preceded by prevision. Natural selection, as an agency in developing structures prior to their functional use, if it has any meaning at all, is simply a mental and directing choice. All the plausibility it possesses, as a phrase, rests upon, and consists in, its implicit reference to the analogies of mind. It is plain, therefore, that the somewhat refined and subtle objection to the old argument from design, that it represents the mind which is supreme in Nature as the mind of a mere artificer, is an objection which

rests on incomplete analysis. It confounds the high functions of a conceiving mind, with the far lower functions of a mere executive mechanic. It fails to recognize that divine element, existing even in ourselves, which needs no external materials to work with, and which seems, so far as our consciousness is concerned, to be independent even of space and time, and to belong altogether to the region of the invisible.

We have seen the instinctive witness borne by scientific men in their use of language. There is another powerful evidence—never hitherto sufficiently recognized—that the presence of mind in Nature is not a fancy, or any mere inference, but a fact of which we have certain and direct perception. That evidence consists not in the use only, but in the very structure of language, and in the etymology of words. For language, like thought itself, of which it is the vesture, is not made, but grows, or is developed. It is the automatic expression of, and the witness to, that which we do really see—all the more to be trusted because of the fact that it is an unconscious witness. It is like the photographic surfaces, which are now made so wonderfully sensitive that, when turned to the sky, they become impressed with the images of stars and of other heavenly bodies which escape altogether from the grasp of conscious vision. So it is with words. It is vain to dispute their self-recording testimony. They cannot report anything which does not really shine in upon the self-consciousness of man, or, in other words, which he does not really see. The structure of the physical retina is

complex and delicate, almost beyond conception, and the truthfulness of its response to the impinging rays of light, is perfect within a special range. But the delicacy and complexity of this structure is as nothing in comparison with the delicacy and complexity of that other mental retina which lies behind, or beyond, it,—which corrects all its inverted images and reads off its own interpretations of them in the inner, and finer, light of mind. Hence it is that words which have been moulded in that light, and have been instinctively adopted as a true rendering of that which men see in Nature, constitute in themselves the best proof of that rendering as the direct and immediate perception of a fact. Such, for example, is the witness borne by the word 'organ' for the functional parts of the living frame in all animals. 'Organon' is a Greek word, and it means an instrument, an implement, a tool *for* the making, or moving, or doing of something else[1]. This is one of the many words which lose much of their significance and force by the familiarity of repetition. As, in the case of a coin in daily use, we never think of the image and superscription that are stamped upon it, although to these it owes its value, so, in the use of a familiar word we forget the mint in which it was struck, and the precious metal of original meaning to which its currency is due. Yet if we substitute some other word which has not become familiar by constant repetition, but which is exactly equivalent, then the full significance of our language is forced upon us.

[1] Scott and Liddell, *Greek Dict.* in voce 'Organon.'

So it is with the Greek word 'organ,' as compared with its Latin equivalent 'apparatus.' The root idea of both words is the same, namely, the idea of a means to an end. Intention is of its very essence. But the word 'organ' has sunk to the level of a mere name for one of the commonest of all things, without compelling us to think of the reason why it has been so appropriated. The word 'apparatus,' on the other hand, has never been separated from its origin in the history of thought, and when we use it, we are always conscious of its inseparable implications. It can never fail to remind us that what we are thinking of when we use it, is a mechanism contrived for a special purpose. And this is exactly what all organs are, in what we call the organic world. Each, and all of them, are fitted, in advance, for the performance of some separate but needed work in the animal economy. When therefore men speak, as they continually do, of the organic world, it would be well for them to remember that they are thinking of and meaning an 'apparatus-world'—of a great province in Nature in which they see instinctively an inexhaustible variety of mechanisms made for the discharge of special functions, and all of them built up beforehand in anticipation of the duty assigned to them. It matters nothing how this building is accomplished—whether by that inexplicable process which we call growth, or by any other. By all means let us find out what this process is, if we can. Two things only are certain about it—the first is, that it is absolutely different from any of the processes of construction which man can use; and

the second is, that as regards its subordination to mental laws, and to the attainment of purpose through the use of means, it is demonstrably identical with our own contrivances.

And thus we come to see a deep and broad distinction between the mental faculty of design, considered in itself, and any power over the mere mechanical methods by which design may be carried into effect. And this is a distinction out of which yet farther suggestions necessarily arise. It does away altogether with the notion that some disparagement, or unworthiness, attaches to our conceptions when we attribute our own mechanical methods to that supreme mind which reigns in Nature. But it does more than this. It illuminates, and in a measure explains, that strange mixture of seeming identity and of contrast, which is so puzzling when we compare and contrast the designs we see in external Nature, with the designs we ourselves can form and execute. In this distinction, therefore, lies all the difference between mere making and creating. There is, however, one common element in both, and that is the element of preconceiving or designing. But all else is different. Our power over matter and the physical forces, is, as it were, at second hand. It is external, not indwelling. In extent it is infinitesimally small as compared with the command over them which we see in Nature; but besides its smallness in extent, it is of a lower kind. It seems as if it were delegated, not original. It is narrowed, confined, and made mechanical, by our inability to get free access

to the physical forces, except by, as it were, mere tricks and circuitous expedients. These are beset with difficulties of process, and are comparatively clumsy in result. In Nature, on the other hand, the power of mind over the physical forces, seems to be immanent, ubiquitous, and omnipresent. The faculty, in us, which sees likeness, is the same which, in the very act of seeing it, must also of necessity see, and estimate, difference. And if we have confidence in the perception which that faculty gives us of the continual presence of mental design in Nature, we must give equal confidence to the perception of that immense distinction between our methods of working out design, and the methods which we see around us, and especially in our own organism, as in all others.

The result of these considerations on the philosophy of religion is simply this, that in our direct perception of the mere presence of mind in Nature we are put in full possession of a fact; whilst in the mystery—in our profound ignorance—of the seat and of the methods of that mind, we are put in full possession of at least a real, substantial, and stimulating, subject of inquiry. For just as the distinction of the two methods marks the difference between mere manufacture and true creation, so does it indicate the corresponding distinction between what has been called natural, and revealed, religion. Not less does it give to religion that firm basis on which all knowledge must rest—the direct perception and firm conviction of something which we call a fact. All possible theology must rest on this foundation.

It is with the recognition of mind in Nature, as a fact, that religion in itself begins. The moment it is distinctly apprehended, as a fact, that there is a mind in Nature, known to us by at least one of its essential characteristics, namely, that of purpose, then we must also apprehend the truth, that a farther knowledge of that mind, in its relations to our own, is not an empty quest—not a vain excursion into the realms of fancy—but the highest of all pursuits, because it concerns the supreme realities of the life which exists in ourselves, and of the life which exists in the world around us. In the full light of the conviction that a mind is somehow, as it were, breathing and thinking behind the veil of all visible things, it becomes impossible to think or speak of religion, as it is now so common to speak of it, as a product of the human mind—a structure of imaginative thought developed out of an advancing culture. This idea, and this language, are seen to be incongruous and impossible, the moment we do really see that the mind which is the subject of all religious conceptions, is a mighty and indisputable, even though it be a mysterious, existence. For in the light of this conception we cannot even tolerate the idea that it can be any creation or imagination of our own.

And then, this conception of an omnipresent mind in Nature being an evident and a mighty fact, carries with it another conception of another reality, which is quite as distinctively, and quite as certainly, a fact and not an imagination. The farther conception is this—that what is true of Nature as a whole must be

true of our own nature as included in that whole. Whatever may be our superficial impression sometimes, that we do in some respects stand, as it were, outside of Nature, and can, more or less, look down upon it as from a height above it, or look up to it as from a depth below it, when we come to reflect we must see and feel that we are simply part of it, bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh, included in all its wonders, and in ourselves the very consummation of all its mysteries.

Repugnant to our pride as this conception may be, in some at least of its aspects, it is too broadly based on a thousand facts to be really any subject of dispute. The identity of principle, and of plan, between our bodies and the bodies of all other living creatures, is as obvious at a glance as it is to the most laborious physiological or biological research. The same mechanical, the same chemical, and the same vital laws, which have to be subordinated to purpose in the humblest and minutest homes of life, play exactly the same part in our own frame. And surely those aspects of this profound and important truth, in which it sometimes may be imagined as degrading, must fade away in those higher aspects which are unveiled to us in the light of reason. For it follows, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that if some universal mind is visibly working in the marvellous adaptations of animal life and instinct, it must be not less certainly working in the higher, yet corresponding, adjustments of our own frame, of our own perceptions, of our own reason, and of our own

conscience. We have our own personal experience to assure us that, although the invisibility of mind is in ourselves a conspicuous fact, it has nevertheless its own ways of shining through the veil of flesh, and giving us true intimations of its presence in a thousand forms of that which we call expression. We cannot fail to be struck by the fact that our bodily organs are all machines elaborately fitted for the discharge of certain functions, and that—however inconceivably to us—some of them are more directly concerned than others in the processes of thought. Nor is it of small significance to see, and know, that all those organs partake of that striking peculiarity of all natural things, but especially of animated creatures, namely that they come into being, not by processes of manufacture, but of development and of growth. Let us not confound this great general conception, which is one of indisputable truth, with the detailed hypotheses as to the particular steps or methods of that development which have been propounded by Lamarck, Darwin, and others. All of these hypotheses, at the very best, are obviously partial and incomplete, and some of them are often grotesque and even irrational. Let us keep to that grand general conception—about which there can be no doubt whatever—that we are born in, and out of, that natural system in which we live—that we are children, not aliens in its domain—partaking, in the highest degree, of all its highest adaptations to function, to work, to thought.

Nothing can give us so firm a trust that our

faculties, when duly exercised and kept within the area of their adapted powers, do really catch and reflect the rays of eternal truth. All our knowledge implies nothing less than this. It is a glorious implication to those who really think of it, and follow it to all that it involves. It is, as it were, a smile of invitation on the countenance of external Nature—a steady glance of encouragement on a face which, however beautiful, is always mysterious, often solemn, and not seldom severe. When we have seen our way, so clearly, to get rid of that confusion of ideas which confounds the conception of design with the conception of mechanical manufacture, it would be a fall, indeed, to tumble back into it, by confounding the great general conception of development or evolution, with the feeble and irrational speculations which identify it with the coarse work of the mere physical forces operating undirected and alone. To us the whole wealth of Nature is in its mind—and in the multiform offers which that mind holds out to us, of more and more intimate communion with our own.

One of the most important consequences following from these conceptions, is that there can obviously be no room for the vulgar distinction between the Natural and the Supernatural. The sphere of Nature includes the whole of that which is cognizable or conceivable by us, and the most prominent of all its characteristics is the presence of a mind whose methods of operation are, indeed, but very partially known to us, but which are obviously capable of ever new forms of manifestation, and, most especially, of

manifestations very nearly related to, if not identical with, those of our own intellect and will. The ultimate relation in which that mind stands to what we know as matter and the physical forces, is altogether unknown, and may perhaps be even inconceivable to us. But this defect of knowledge ought not to stagger us in accepting the evidence of our senses, and of our reason, as to the mental quality of the work we see done in Nature; since exactly the same defect of understanding applies to the relations of mind to matter, and to the physical forces, as these relations exist in ourselves. The connexion between thought and the brain, or any other material organ, is quite as inconceivable to us as the connexion between the mind that we see in Nature, and the physical forces as these are known to us. The gulf between them seems wholly impassable by any wings of thought with which we are furnished. There is, in our conceptions, not only a difference, but a positive antithesis between mind and matter, or between the energies of mind and a material force. But this antithesis does not seem to be greater in external Nature than it seems to be in ourselves. On the contrary, it seems to be rather less conspicuous in Nature than it is in us. In external Nature the connexion seems to be more clearly and more absolutely that of complete possession on the one hand, and complete submission upon the other. And the nature of the command exerted looks more like that of an indwelling spirit than in any form which it takes with us.

Yet these are words which are little more than

words. They are drawn from the analogy of our own living frame, in which this conception of an indwelling mind is familiar to us. But it leaves the ultimate nature of that indwelling as difficult, or as impossible, a conception as ever. Still, we must remember that a true analogy, drawn from Nature, is the most solid foundation which we can have for thought. The unity of Nature makes it so. It is one of the most powerful weapons in all scientific research. In it lies the whole soul, and strength, and subtlety, of human speech, as a means not merely of communicating, but of reaching, truth. Speech is saturated with the element of metaphor, and all metaphor is essentially founded on the perception of analogies. But although we never do, and never can, think of our own mind or spirit as an indwelling presence and power in the automatic machines which we construct, we can, and we do, habitually think of our own mind and spirit as an indwelling presence and power in the mechanism of our own bodily frame; and farther, as that frame is not of our own construction, and is yet full of mechanical adaptations, we can perfectly conceive of the mind that is in external Nature, being a living and working power in our own. In fact, the most easy conception, perhaps, that we can entertain, is the conception that our own mind and intellect is a fragmentary manifestation of—a mere emanation from—the universal mind which we see in Nature. And the more we can think of ourselves as 'evolved' or 'developed,' and the less we can think of ourselves as a mere mechanical manufacture, the more firmly can

we hold to a rational confidence in our own powers, when acting in their proper sphere. Of the limitations of that sphere, indeed, we are fully conscious. Yet in this very consciousness we do, in a manner, overpass the boundary. That is to say, in being conscious of a boundary, we become also aware of the existence of a beyond.

In two chapters of a former work I have dealt with the considerations which may assure us that the felt limitations on our knowledge are not such as to throw any doubt upon its truthfulness[1]. Not only is that knowledge true, so far as it goes, but, with the greatest confidence, we may feel sure that the lines of thought which it establishes, are lines which, at the spot where they are intercepted by some barrier, point steadily in a true direction to what is equally truth beyond it. This is a conception of great power, not only in itself, but in its immediate consequences. It is firmly founded on our convictions of the unity of Nature—a unity which everything confirms; whilst no other conception is so impressive in the motive and inducement it holds out to us to exhaust all that is knowable by thought, reflection, and research, within the sphere which is most directly accessible to us. To keep our eyes well open to all that can be seen within our limits—to neglect nothing, to set aside nothing, to forget nothing, that can have any significance—is a vigilance not less imposed upon us as a duty than held out to us as a sure hope and expectation of some great reward. The feeling is

[1] *Unity of Nature*, chaps. iv. and v. (John Murray.)

indelible in our nature, that whatever is relatively true here, either continues to be true in the beyond, or else has, there, some counterpart with which it stands in a close analogy. What we call the love of truth for its own sake, which in some poor degree is present in all minds, and is a ruling passion in all minds of the highest class, is a love which has the instinct of this belief as its fountain and its justification. It affords a full and satisfying answer to the false logic which has been often used to deny and disprove all certitude as attainable by us. Our knowledge, it is said, is derived solely from our experience. Then the argument follows, that as our experience is finite, it is therefore incapable of affording any ground for infinite conclusions. But there is a subtle fallacy in this argument. It may be true of conclusions which involve the element of time. But it is not true of conceptions in which time is no element at all. No length, for example, of human experience of the sunrise and of the sunset, can give us an absolute certainty that they will continue after to-day. But our human reason can and does give us an absolute certainty that, if they cease, the cessation must be due to some cause. There is no element of time in this conclusion. It rests, in a sense, upon experience; but it is in an internal and intellectual experience of that kind which we call a necessity of thought. On the perception of this kind of necessity all reasoning rests. The axioms and postulates of mathematics are of this kind — but probably it may be said with truth that mathematical axioms are the lowest of the class. Men often speak

of mathematical demonstration as the most absolutely certain kind of truth. But this is a great delusion. The definiteness and neatness of mathematical demonstrations, impose upon us in this respect, whereas, in reality, that very definiteness is itself only a result and proof of the comparative lowness of the sphere within which mathematical demonstration is confined. That sphere is absolutely confined to things which can be handled, and divided, into measurable units, and between which purely numerical relations can be traced. This is tantamount to saying that mathematical demonstration applies only to matter and the physical forces—measurable in themselves, and working measurably in time and space. It can touch nothing, therefore, in the sphere of ethics, or in the sphere of all those other purely intellectual conceptions which are equally independent of space and time, and are therefore equally incapable of being concerned in the terms of measurable units. The truth is that all the phenomena of life, with whatever certainties it may contain, lie outside of, and beyond, the reach of this kind of demonstration—and this, not because of their having any lower degree of certainty, but because, on the contrary, of their certainties being of a much higher kind. The inorganic world is the home of mathematical demonstration; but the whole organic world is unapproachable by its methods. Yet the certainties of our knowledge in the organic world, and in the world of mind which is inseparable from it, are not less, but more absolute, and vastly more important. That two material

things which are in magnitude equal to a third, must be equal to each other, is not a truth more certain than that stealing is immoral, and that immorality is wrong. These two kinds of truth are incommensurate—the intellectual and moral kind being of an infinitely higher kind than the mathematical, but yet not capable of the same kind of experimental verification. That all things must have a cause is to our minds an axiomatic or self-evident proposition, as evidently true as any axiom of mathematics; yet it is a proposition that cannot be brought into any conceivable relation with measurable units. We must get rid, therefore, of the notion, which clings to the mind of those engaged in physical pursuits, that certainty in knowledge is only attainable by that kind of reasoning which belongs to mathematical demonstration.

This delusion has been intensified by the widespread interest which, in our time, is taken in the pursuit of physical research, and in the advancing triumphs which that research has achieved. Through this it has come about that the very name and idea of science is practically confined in popular language to the physical sciences. It is almost, as it were, by some grace or favour that the word 'science' is extended to other branches of inquiry than those which concern matter and its forces. And yet nothing can be more certain than that the proper and full meaning of the word 'science' is simply systematic knowledge —that is to say, a knowledge of things, not as isolated facts or phenomena, but in their true connexion with

each other. Our knowledge is scientific in proportion as we know things in many, or in a few only, of their relations to each other, and to their causes. It follows that the very heights of science must be occupied by any knowledge we can gain as to those relations which are in themselves of the highest kind—the most nearly ultimate. Yet we are very apt to be so proud, and head-turned, by the achievements of mere physical discovery, as to forget how small have been its results in this direction. It may almost be said with truth, that, as regards all the ultimate problems which the human mind does always more or less consciously place before itself as demanding a solution, the apparently long march of physical research has not even approached the goal of any one of them. I do not, of course, mean to say that this long march has done nothing indirectly. The very demonstration of its own incompetence to tell us what we most desire to know, is a negative result of immense value in enabling us to appreciate the comparatively low sphere, and comparatively poor significance, of all that has been reached by mere physical discovery. If we examine the general result carefully, we shall find that it has been mainly the discovery, in greater detail, of truths which had long been felt and known in terms more general and abstract. This is especially true of all the branches of physical science that bring us at once into closest contact with the ultimate problems, the very highest questions which our intellect can conceive, and which our spirit can and does most eagerly desire to solve.

I refer especially to the science of Biology in all its ramifications. It is the strangest of all delusions that the general conception of evolution or development has any novelty at all. The only thing that is at all novel has been the various theories which have been recently suggested about the physical methods, or steps, through which development has gone. But those theories are certainly incompetent from defect, and are probably largely erroneous even in direction. Considering that every individual organism has been visibly, and notoriously, built up by the development of germs, and that this fact has found expression in the language of poetry, philosophy, and theology, from the earliest records of our race, it does seem an almost unaccountable misapprehension to suppose that there is any new discovery in the idea that, as a fact, all living things are born, and grow, instead of being manufactured as our own mechanical inventions are. It may be true indeed, and it is most true, that the consequences involved in this general conception, have not until lately been fully apprehended, and that some of those consequences have come out more clearly because of the farther tracing of this general conception into the details of its visible manifestations. For all such consequences, in thought, we ought to be ever on the watch. The anticipation and expectation of them is the great cause and justification of our instinctive curiosity in the detection of details. But it does not in the least follow that the most valuable of these consequences will, as a matter of course, be most speedily apprehended by those investigators

who may do the most effective, and even the most splendid, work in identifying the details by which they are suggested. On the contrary, it is more than probable that those who are engrossed in the detection of physical details, will also be engrossed by the purely physical aspects of phenomena, and may even have some aversion to conceptions which seem chiefly to belong to another sphere. But the great fact to be observed is, that, sometimes, the most ancient and the most familiar and popular conceptions on many subjects of the highest scientific interest, are conceptions which include much, if not all, that has been more recently discovered on the same subject—as the greater includes the less. Thus, for example, the common and familiar conception which all men have had from the beginning of the world, that the various parts and organs of the lower animals, are, to a large extent identical or 'homologous' with the corresponding parts and organs in man—this is a general conception, which covers and includes all that has since been done by such men as Cuvier and Owen and Huxley. The heads, the limbs, the eyes and ears, of beasts, have been instinctively recognized since man existed as organic parts corresponding with our own. In principle and in significance there is really nothing new in the latest discoveries on this kind of correspondence, except in so far as those discoveries prove that the old instinctive conceptions were founded on a deeper and more thorough identification than could by possibility have been made before. Never-

theless, those discoveries are science, in the truest senses of the word, because they enable us to know things with greater certainty—in a larger number of their true relations to each other—and, perhaps also, more closely in their relation to something which lies beyond, or behind, or above, them all.

It is thus that, sometimes, in the handling of the details of physical research, men are brought, as it were, into closer quarters than before, with those ultimate questions which are the most baffling, and that some convictions are borne in upon the mind, with a power and strength than which nothing can be surpassed in certainty. Such, for example, is the conviction often expressed by the great physiologist, John Hunter, and which is quoted and adapted by Huxley as 'well founded'—'that life is the cause, and not the consequence, of organization.' I am not sure that this conviction, significant and far-reaching as it is, can be affirmed to be new, or the result only of modern biological research. The language of all ages in expressing the conception of that which we know as life, is not only in harmony with this conviction, but generally implies it, more or less distinctly. Never have men spoken, or thought, of the separate parts of the body, as the causes of the life that is in them. Nevertheless, our natural sense of the true order of causation receives a new basis of fact to stand upon, and rises from that basis into a higher and firmer structure of definite conviction, when we are brought face to face with such facts as those referred to by Huxley in this

connexion—'for,' he says, 'in the lowest forms of animal life there is absolutely nothing worthy of the name of organization to be discovered by the microscopist, though assisted by the beautiful instruments that are now constructed. In the substance of many of those creatures, nothing is to be discerned but a mass of jelly, which might be represented by a particle of thin glue. Not that it corresponds with the latter in composition, but it has that texture and sort of aspect: it is structureless, and organless, and without definitely formed parts. Nevertheless, it possesses all the essential properties and characters of vitality[1].'

Here we find ourselves at once confronted with a fact of the intellectual consciousness, which lifts us out of the sphere of mere structural details, and indeed, as it would seem, out of the sphere of mere physics altogether. The stress here openly laid upon the distinction between cause and effect—the unquestioned assumption that it is a real and fundamental distinction, on which much depends—is in itself an invaluable contribution to the certainty of our knowledge, and to the truthfulness of our faculties. There have been, and still are, many philosophers who deny that we have any knowledge of true causation. They reduce the conception, as known to us, down to that of a mere order of sequence in phenomena. But that our idea of causation is in itself more than this, is a matter of fact, and not a mere matter of opinion. In the very act of denying our right to entertain that idea, its separate character and nature is confessed

[1] Huxley, *Elements of Comparative Anatomy*, pp. 10, 11.

and identified. The denial is a paradox—a contradiction in terms—an admission of that which is denied. Our conception of causes is a fact. The argument or assumption is, that we are not justified by our nature in entertaining that conception at all. It is a matter of high interest to observe how such men as Hunter and Huxley treat this assumption with unconscious but absolute neglect, and how they admit the opposite conviction as undeniable. Fresh from the contemplation of the most mysterious phenomena of Nature, and from the contemplation of these at the point, as it were, when they first issue from the Unseen, these men speak as if they could not even entertain the notion of causation being other than a fundamental reality in Nature. With the mental eye they have seen it working, and they find the proof of the truth of this mental vision in the very fact on which they dwell, that nothing in the nature of a cause is to be seen by the bodily faculty of sight. Certain effects are visible to the bodily eye. That which causes the effects lies in the region of the Unseen, and they call it life.

The doctrine however of Hunter, that life is the cause of organization, and that organization is not the cause of life, cannot be allowed to rest only on the particular proof and illustration to which Huxley refers. The coexistence of animal life with a substance which to all appearance is perfectly homogeneous and destitute of structure, may be an illustration of the doctrine which, to some minds, seems most significant and conclusive. But the doctrine is

quite as securely founded on all animal life, however highly organized. The truth is, that as regards those lowest creatures, which seem to us to consist of nothing but a formless jelly, there may be, nevertheless, a great deal more 'differentiation' than we suppose. We must remember that the finest microscopes now constructed are impotent to detect the molecular and atomic constitution of any form of matter; and it is at least possible, if not highly probable, that in the seemingly formless jelly of a rhizopod or a sponge, there may be some definite arrangement of parts which have corresponding relation to the functions of even the lowest forms of life. But this would make no difference in our conviction of the truth of the Hunterian doctrine. The same apparently structureless character which belongs to the living substance of a sponge, belongs to the germinal stages of all other living things. Out of that living substance, and by virtue of the vital forces which are at its command, do all such germs build up the separate organs, which, in the higher creatures, are destined to separate functions. There is no visible structure in the white of an egg: yet we all know what a highly organized structure arises out of it, under the causation of vitality, and of the mechanical stimulus of heat.

The conviction, therefore, that vitality is the necessary condition precedent to organization, or in other words, that vitality is the cause of organization, and not its consequence, is even more forced upon us by those creatures whose organization is ultimately high, than in those whose organization stops at

the stage of an apparently formless jelly. It is particularly striking in the case of a bird's egg, because of the isolation of all eggs which are hatched by mere heat—outside of, and wholly separated from, the parent organism. When no such separation takes place—when the ova of animals are hatched in the mother's womb—the process undoubtedly involves the same law, and the same principle; but it is less striking to us, because, although it must be a ceaseless wonder 'how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child,' yet the continued presence of, and the continued connexion with, a highly complex vitality in the mother, distracts our attention, as it were, from the separate vitality resident in the germ. But when that separate vitality is so completely cut off from the parent, as it is in a bird's egg, and when it can be seen from day to day developing, under the mere influence of a definite external temperature, all the organs of a very highly complex and richly endowed creature, the witness borne to the true causality of life—the building up of organization—is surely even greater than in the case of those lower creatures whose structureless substance works out nothing but a calcareous shell, or a network of silicious rods. Neither, on the other hand, if we come to think of it, would our conviction of the true causality of life be one whit diminished if we could discover, by some new means of vision or analysis, that there is some more structure in the living, jelly-like substance of the lowest form of life, than we had supposed. If, for example, it should be discovered

that there is always some minute granulation or tendency to a nucleus in such substances, our conviction would remain the same. That granulation would be necessarily regarded by us as itself the effect of the vitality resident in the substance, and the nucleated structure, however simple and low in character, would be assigned by us, as a necessity of thought, to the invisible power of that which we know as life.

The familiarity of the general facts connected with the external hatching of eggs by the purely mechanical aid of a certain amount of heat, is a familiarity which deadens our intelligence to the inscrutable mystery and wonder of the thing that is done. But when an egg is opened during successive days and hours of the process, the impression it must make upon the mind is far greater than that which arises from the fact that some of the most beautiful forms in Nature are built up by the energies resident in the living jelly of a 'foraminifer' or of a sponge. When we see the pulsing spot at which the work begins, and the formless mass becoming gradually differentiated along lines of structure which lie wholly in the invisible, but come gradually and slowly into sight as the plan of a functional apparatus is developed, it is impossible to resist that conviction which rests upon the concurrent testimony of the senses and of the intellect, that the indwelling power, which we know as vitality, is the efficient cause of those inconceivable results which we thus see in the actual process of attainment. This conviction is all the more over-

powering in the case of some birds—the whole class called the gallinaceous birds—not only because of the perfection and complication of the plan which is worked out and accomplished inside the shell before the creature is born into the world, but also on account of the rapidity and perfection of that accomplishment. No transmutation of one elementary substance into another which was ever dreamed of by the wildest alchemist in the Middle Ages, can make the most distant approach to the transmutation of material which takes place when the vitality in an egg, changes the structureless matter in which it lies concealed, into all the organs of a chick—manifesting, from the moment of exclusion, many of the distinctive powers and affections of mind and will, and able, in some cases—as in that of the Brush Turkeys of Australia—to run, to fly, and to lead the life of a perfect bird, from the moment of emerging from the shell.

The same conviction would no doubt be as inevitably pressed upon us as if we had the same means and opportunities of watching the process—quite as mysterious and incomprehensible—which is employed in the metamorphosis of insects, of crustaceous, and other lower forms of life. This is a process whereby the same powers of vitality are employed to change the whole structure of a highly organized and living creature into another kind of being wholly different, and adapted for a sphere of life and of activity absolutely new—new in everything—new in structure, new in food, new in instincts, new even in the very elements in which alone it can live and move. The

general fact is indeed familiar; but the details are not so easily accessible, and few men are perhaps aware of the wide range and prevalence of that strictly creative work which, in this form, is perpetually going on in what we call the organic world.

Such convictions as those thus recorded by Hunter and Huxley, being impressed upon the mind by close contemplation of natural phenomena, are convictions which constitute the highest kind of knowledge. In philosophy and in religion they correspond with the self-evident truths which, in mathematics, are the foundation stones of all possible demonstration. For the great beauty of them is that there is in them a virtue stretching far beyond the subject of their immediate application. They are charged with conceptions which carry us behind the veil—far on into the region of the invisible. One of those conceptions is that of a true causation—not a mere sequence or succession of phenomena—but a necessary connexion between an efficient cause and one at least of its effects. Another conception which is involved is, that the cause which is thus identified with all the force of an instinctive recognition, is an agency that is invisible. We cannot even think of it as seen or seeable. We can indeed conceive the possibility of some instrument being invented and constructed, which might reveal to our senses some minute and shadowy traces of a structure in the initial substance which, at first sight, we had thought of as absolutely formless. But if this were indeed to happen, we should equally be compelled to go back

behind it, and to think of the newly discovered traces as the beginnings of an effect, and not as the visible essence of that vitality which is the cause.

And all this is most important: for just as there are philosophers who have tried to argue themselves out of all capacity to conceive any true cause, so have other philosophers tried to argue themselves out of the possibility of having any conception of this particular cause, namely life as a real existence. They have busied themselves in the invention of words, which may as much as possible eliminate this conception from our language, and reduce our idea of that which we call life to a mere description of some of the lowest of its visible, and concomitant, phenomena. This is the secret, for example, of the common substitution of the word 'differentiation' for the word 'structure,' and of the much more elaborate attempt of Mr. Herbert Spencer to give a definition of life out of which all its great peculiarities are obliterated. An 'advance from homogeneity to heterogeneity' is the memorable result of this attempt so to define life as to eliminate the very essence of that conception which the definition pretends to cover. I call it memorable, because of its obvious failure, even when the attempt is conducted by a mind of great acuteness. The passage of visible 'homogeneity' to visible 'heterogeneity' in a material substance, is no doubt part, although a fragmentary part, of the work which we see done by life acting as a cause. But there is a sense, and a much truer sense, in which 'heterogeneity' is the result of that which we know

as death, rather than of that which we know as life. Our blood, when the life is in it, is comparatively homogeneous, and we only know how heterogeneous it can become when the life is out of it, and when consequently its unity is broken up, and it becomes decomposed into a variety of elements. The truth is, that when we come to think of it closely, the very words 'homogeneity' and 'heterogeneity' are misused and even inverted as to their proper senses, in Mr. Herbert Spencer's famous formula for life. The separate chemical materials of a living structure are held together, homogeneously, by nothing except a common subordination to a common force and to a common end. Their heterogeneous nature and properties do not indeed cease to exist internally and unperceived, but their separateness is masked because of their adapted union in one co-operative work. That which effects the union and co-operation is, in the strictest sense, the genesis of the structure, and it is in the co-operative alliance that the only homogeneity of the whole consists. Harmony in the discharge of function is obviously the highest kind of homogeneity, and thus life may most truly be said to be a continuous process directly the reverse of that which is asserted in Mr. Herbert Spencer's formula. Life, as exhibited in organic structures, is an advance from elementary heterogeneity to structural homogeneity, and to the building up of that which is essentially one in its functions and effects.

Chapter II.

INTUITIVE THEOLOGY.

RECOGNITIONS IN THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.

THE definitions arrived at, in the last chapter, go far to establish the dominant power of purpose as a fact in Nature. Not as the result of any argument, but as a direct and immediate perception, does this fact stand out revealed. And is not this result of analysis true in the highest sense? Do we not all feel it to be true in contemplating organic structures, and is it not a truth which is reflected automatically in that recorder of the deepest truths—the common speech of men? Do we not classify together in one great category all living things as distinguished from the not-living things—this being, indeed, the widest distinction of which we have any knowledge? The essential homogeneity of life in all its forms is, perhaps, the most far-reaching truth that modern biological science has contributed to establish, and to illustrate, in an ever-increasing body of new details. The whole of this subject has been confused by the abuse of language—that is to say, by the employment of words which are kept, indeed, as articulate

sounds, but are emptied or discharged of their only meaning. This is a trick which men play upon themselves, and upon others, which has never been sufficiently detected and exposed. We must therefore pursue the testimony of language a little farther in the present chapter, breaking, if we can, some fresh ground of illustration and of specified examples. Much has been said and written since the very beginning of philosophy, on the fallacies which lie in words. Far too little has been said, and far too little is ever thought, of the wealth which lies in words as an inexhaustible fountain and store of truth. It is the misuse of them, not the use of them, that leads to error. And the greatest misuse of all is to mistrust them, to fail in the recognition of them as what they really are—the most faithful records accessible to our intelligence of some of the most important of all facts. And this they are, because words have not been made by artifice, but have grown up by Nature. We do not often even try to invent a new word, and when some new conception, resulting from the discoveries of science, compels us to make the attempt, we are always driven to the old materials with which we have been supplied by the unconscious and self-recording work of many generations. Even then, new coinages are apt to be fragmentary and affected. But the truth is, that the real discoveries of science do very rarely need the coinage of new words. So intimate and far-reaching is the unity of Nature, that in the vast majority of cases, new facts do not involve any essentially new ideas, but only some fresh applica-

tion of old ideas which have long been familiar. The consequence is, that the old words which have rolled down the stream of time, and have expressed the conceptions of men on some one or other of the oldest and simplest aspects of Nature, are found to be quite large and wide enough, to cover the newest and most extended applications.

It is indeed most curious to observe how capacious some of the oldest words expressing abstract ideas have been found to be—how easily all newly discovered facts fall under the meaning of some one or other of them, and how little need, as well as how little possibility, there is of new articulate inventions. The great advances, for example, which have been made by modern science in discovering the real nature of heat, and light, and sound, are all covered by anticipation in that wonderful Greek word ἐνεργεία—energy—a word which embraces conceptions as wide as all our possible knowledge of the universe. Modern science has done nothing except to invest those conceptions with a more definite reality, and to prove how true to Nature has been the speech-making faculty in man, and with what reverence we should regard its genuine products. This respect is due to words because of their origin and cause. Born out of the contact of the universal mind that is in man, with the universal mind that is in external Nature, words are the stamped impression made by the greatest of all energies upon the most sensitively true of all adapted surfaces. I return here to the analogy before employed in

dealing with this subject, because it is an analogy of the most profound significance. Words are like the impressions made by the heavenly bodies upon the highly 'sensitized' paper which is now prepared for the purpose of receiving and recording the faintest scintillations of light coming from distances which are inconceivable. Those impressions are often revelations as to existences which cannot otherwise be seen, as well as of those which can be seen in the sensitized structures of the human eye. But they are all facts; and no astronomer, in reasoning on those facts, would think himself at liberty to set any one of them aside. Still less would they think it anything short of a high crime and misdemeanour against the obligations of all scientific inquiry, to eliminate from the star-maps before them, any indications which they may present of motion, of arrangement, of structure, and of law. These, on the contrary, they feel to be the very highest objects of their quest, and the slightest traces of them, are treasured and pondered with a scrupulous fidelity.

It is the same with other physical sciences. We exhaust every device of mechanical ingenuity to construct delicate instruments which shall indicate and record automatically the movements and work of the invisible and imponderable forces of which the world is full. And nothing, perhaps, is more impressive, when we allow ourselves really to think of it, than the revelation which such instruments continually afford of the constant presence and power of energies around us and in us, of which we

are wholly unconscious, and of the ultimate nature of which we are still profoundly ignorant. But at least we are now awake to the supreme reality of all the recorded facts, and we strain our mental vision, with every effort that is possible, to catch sight of everything that those facts imply. The slightest conscious unfaithfulness in taking due note of any of those facts or indications, is inconceivable to a scientific mind. The very possibility of arriving at a comprehension of them, in their true relations to each other, and to Nature as a whole, depends, of course, upon a scrupulous integrity in the enumeration, and in the recognition, of them all.

When we consider what the human mind is, in its inborn capacities and powers for apprehending and reflecting the phenomena of Nature, because of its own close relationship with these, it is surely impossible to exaggerate the importance that we ought to attach to automatic records of its working in the development of speech. That which it so expresses has been undoubtedly seen and felt. Nor less certainly have all such feelings and perceptions come to us by the action of external agencies upon adapted surfaces. And when we consider what the origin and history of our modern languages has been—how they have been built up, slowly and unconsciously, from primitive times, by a great number of the most intellectual races of mankind, each of them contributing some affluent to the main stream—each of them, too, by a true process of natural selection, sifting and dropping every element of conception which has become incongruous or effete

—we cannot be too deeply impressed with the great realities which are enshrined in words, and with the power they have in revealing truth. If it were conceivable that primitive men, or man in any of his earlier stages of civilization, could have invented the art of photography, and had left pictures taken by it representing all his ways, and manners, and life, we can imagine with what intense interest we should now study them, and trace out every faintest indication of light and shadow that might illustrate or explain so much that we do not know. And yet such pictures could, after all, have represented nothing except the most external things—the form of dress, the habitation—the food—the weapons—the manners and customs, of our vanished ancestors. Just such pictures, only carrying information that goes infinitely deeper, are the mental images which have been made, and left, in words. They are nothing but pictures, indelible and unfading, of the impressions made upon men's spiritual and intellectual structure, by all the phenomena of the world within them and around them. The imagery, and the metaphors, which they contain, are the direct record of that immediate perception of the unities of Nature, which is not only most vivid but is most true, when it is simple and untainted by any conscious self-analysis. Words are therefore, in a pre-eminent degree, that which St. Paul gives as the definition of faith—they are the 'evidence of things not seen.' That is to say, they are the direct embodiment and expression of relations which can only be intellectually perceived.

Such being the real nature and history of words, it follows that there can be no greater virtue in all scientific investigations than a scrupulous regard for the faithful use of them. Any temptation to juggle with their meaning, is above all things to be resisted in ourselves, and to be detected and exposed in others, as the most insidious of all endeavours to deceive either our own minds, or the minds of other men. In particular, to use them, and all their implications, for the purposes of mere description, and then to reject those implications for the purposes of abstraction or philosophy, is to be dishonest with ourselves, and to vitiate science at its very source. If we find that, practically, we cannot describe to others, or to ourselves, the phenomena of Nature, without employing for that purpose words which have come down to us through untold generations of men—words minted perhaps in the earliest utterances of Aryan speech, and since that time preserved and cherished for constant use in the noblest forms of human language, such as those of Greece and Rome—then we are bound to use these words in the true sense and meaning which they have so long conveyed. The convenience we find in them for the purposes of mere description, the absolute need under which we find ourselves of using them as an instrument of thought, lies wholly in that historic sense and meaning, with all its implications. These are to be recognized not only as facts, but as belonging to the very highest class of facts accessible to man. Not only, or merely, for the conveyance of thought and intelligence

from one human being to another, but for the very defining of perceptions, and the preservation of them as separate objects of contemplation, words are the very seat and shrine of truths which would assuredly, without them, be obscured and lost.

Such being the intellectual wealth—such being the virtue which lies in words, and which is enshrined in the very sounds and letters of their composition—we can see how it is, and why it is, that an unfaithful handling of them, may exert the most poisonous power at the very fountain-head of knowledge. And no kind of handling is likely to be so unfaithful as that which is spent in trying to pick them into pieces, and to reject as useless this, that, or the other, element of meaning, which we may feel to be incongruous with some preconceived philosophical theory of our own. If words are in themselves things, and the most real of all things, we must treat them as what they are—the most significant facts in Nature. If they are, as it were, the photographic images of perception, as stamped on the mental retina of men from the beginning of our race, every line which they record, every gradation of light and shade which they have preserved for our instruction, must be admitted as the most unimpeachable of all witnesses in the courts of truth. If, indeed, there be any words which the progress of discovery has shown to have been founded on erroneous analogies, then these may be amended, or we may cease to use them. But to continue the use of words because we are conscious that we cannot do without them, and then to reject or neglect any of

their implications, is the highest crime we can commit against the only faculties which enable us to grasp the realities of the world.

Yet this is the kind of work now constantly and deliberately done in modern philosophy when men stop, and turn aside from the using of words, to the operation of defining them. All fidelity to fact is then cast away. The function and duty of the analyst is forgotten—the duty, namely, of giving a full and exhaustive report on the ingredients before him. I have dwelt upon this elsewhere[1] in connexion with the investigation of another subject, namely the words which have grown up out of the economic relations of men to each other in society. But the principle applies equally to the analysis of words in all departments of thought, and its value and importance are, of course, greatest in those in which words have grown up in close connexion with the highest and deepest objects of contemplation. In analyzing words of this class, it is our duty, as in all others, to report fully to ourselves, and others, on all the elements of meaning that they do actually contain, and not to leave out any of them that we can recognize or detect. This is the principle of all true analysis in the physical world when we try to reach the ultimate constituents of material substances, and this is equally the principle on which we must proceed in reaching the elements contained in our own conceptions. The presence of these elements of meaning is a fact, and

[1] *The Unseen Foundations of Society*, chap. iii. (London: John Murray.)

if we are to proceed scientifically, that presence must be treated as what it is. Our business is to report on all that is there—not on some selected parts which alone we choose to look at, throwing the rest away. Such conduct on the part of a chemist dealing with matter would be an offence against his science and his art. When all the elements have been separated and determined, the commercial value of each of them is quite another question. But the purely scientific value lies in the knowledge of the combination as a fact of Nature. So it must be with our analysis of language. What all men, of many races and of immemorial generations, have, as a matter of fact, seen in Nature, they have unconsciously recorded by a purely automatic process, in the structure of human speech, and our very first business, in all philosophy, is to read that record faithfully.

Let us now proceed to illustrate this doctrine, and see how it applies. We shall soon see what a light it casts—what a sweep it has—how great have been the errors due to a neglect of it—what gaps have been left in knowledge by not attending to it.

In all languages that which we know as life has had a word appropriated to the expression of it. In all its forms, whether animal or only vegetable, it has made on the human mind one great general impression. It is a thing directly perceived as a thing by itself—separated by a wide interval from all other things whatever. The modern microscopist is very proud of himself when he has detected organisms of

which it is difficult or impossible to say whether they are vegetable or animal. All the searchers in the several branches of the immense science of Biology bring their several contributions to the same conclusion. The physiologist, the morphologist, the histologist—all repeat in various ways, that, in its last retreats, life runs up into ultimate phenomena which look as if they were identical, or at least are indistinguishable by us. But language knew all this long ago. Human speech had identified life as—through all its ranges—one. It has recorded this fact as impressed upon the mind, in words which bear the indelible stamp of the immediate perception which they express. We speak of a living plant, even if it be a moss or the lowest cryptogam, as certainly and as fully as we speak of a living beast, or of a living man. We speak of a dead plant or of a dead seaweed, with as definite a meaning as we speak of a dead human being. No modern discovery about the apparent likeness of cells in animal and vegetable tissues, has done more than merely carry down into detail that great identification which the common word 'life' has reached, ever since man has begun to speak.

And now let us see what men make of this grand word 'life,' when they pretend to analyze it. Of course it is a legitimate exercise of thought to look inwards upon our own conceptions, and to specify, if we can, the indications by which we distinguish the living from the not-living. One of the foremost of these indications consists in the phenomena of

growth. But this is only another of those grand and simple words with which analyzers are not contented, and which, accordingly, they try again to break up into some component elements, out of which they may pick and choose, and may drop what they please to consider as not essential. It is here that the process of self-deception begins; and it cannot be presented in a more striking case than in that furnished by the great naturalist Cuvier, in the Introduction to his immortal work *Le Règne Animale*. There he seems to have thought it necessary to attempt some definition of the 'essence of life,' and as growth stands out pre-eminently as the most universal of its characteristic phenomena, he tried to define that also as a necessary step. But as growth is dependent on food, and food can only be instrumental in growth when it has been eaten and digested, Cuvier's next thought was to define digestion. But as digestion involves the processes—very complex—of the assimilation of certain food elements and the rejection of others, Cuvier felt the need of reducing this immense complexity into some simpler conception, by the convenient operation of blotting out from his analysis not only some of the facts, but the most special of them all. Such words as digestion and assimilation cannot be used without implying that very word 'life' which he was trying to define. He had no resource, therefore, but to get rid of the conception of a decomposing power over the substances of food, combined with a selective power over its elements when separated and made accessible to

absorption. These powers being once got rid of, by being shut out from view, it became possible to form a sham conception of vital growth as nothing but a mechanical taking in, and a corresponding mechanical throwing out, of external matter. In this way the 'Essence of Life' could be represented to the self-deceived imagination, as a mere power of continuous intake, and outflow, of surrounding substances. Then it seems to have occurred to Cuvier to ask whether there was not some analogous phenomena in Nature which might be useful as an explanatory image? One such was obvious. It was a whirlwind—a waterspout—a vortex. All of these forms of a concentrated force, lifting, attracting, embodying, and again rejecting, matter, as they rush along, corresponded well with the bare and attenuated and deceptive definition to which he had reduced the grand, and deep, and impenetrable, mysteries of life. And so this great man—gifted with the most splendid genius—was brought down by an unfaithful handling of words to this miserable definition :—'Life, then, is a whirlwind more or less rapid—more or less complicated, whose direction is constant, and which carries always with it molecules of the same kind, but into which the individual molecules enter, and out of which they depart continually, in such a manner that the form of the living body is always more essential than its substance[1].'

Who does not feel in reading this definition that even if it can be accepted as representing one single

[1] *Le Règne Animale.* Bruxelles, ed. 3, vol. i. p. 7.

aspect of an organized living body, it is an aspect which is of the most superficial kind, and that it specially avoids, and conceals from our view, some of the most essential and characteristic features of that great mystery which it professes to define? And this is all the more remarkable because Cuvier was not seduced into this bad definition by the temptation so to manipulate the meaning of words as to provide a basis for some preconceived philosophical theory or system. Cuvier had no such system to maintain. He falls into error solely because he proceeds upon a false notion of what a true definition ought to be. To reduce any great general conception to its lowest or simplest terms, may be a perfectly legitimate operation; but to cut out of a great general conception, all, or any, of its most vital parts, is, in the highest degree, illegitimate and fallacious. The word 'life' represents a great group of very complex ideas, and to cut out a whole number of them and to suppress them altogether, is not to define the word but to misrepresent and to degrade it. Nor is this all: for to degrade and misrepresent a word, and especially such a word as this, expressing one of the primary conceptions of the mind, is to misrepresent and to degrade Nature, and our own nature in particular. It is to shut our eyes to fact and truth, to stifle knowledge, and often to make us even proud of our self-deceptions, as if they were great triumphs of the abstracting faculty of the intellect. But subtracting is not the same thing as abstracting. A good abstraction is a faithful epitome of some whole. But

a subtracting definition is either a thoughtless, or else a tricky, presentation of some fragment, as if it were the whole. And very often we shall find, on a close examination, that even the selected fragment has its heart and soul washed out of it, and nothing but a semblance—a mere skin of it—is held up to our view.

All this is so eminently true in the particular example I have adduced, that we must examine it a little further, as a typical case of the kind of abuse by which language, instead of being one of the richest fountains of knowledge, may be turned into the most poisonous of all the sources of fallacy.

Cuvier's reduction of our conception of life down to the low level of our conception of a mechanical vortex, is effected entirely by the shutting of our mental eyes to the indisputable contents of two words —one, the common word 'growth,' the other, the more pretentious word 'assimilation.' 'Growth' is by far the more powerful and comprehensive word of the two. 'Assimilation' is comparatively artificial, being a compound, and neither directly meaning, nor necessarily implying, anything more than simple likening—the making of one thing to be like another. But as there are many different degrees and kinds of likeness, the conception of a mere likening process, falls very far short indeed of that kind of likening which is involved in organic growth. There may be a likening between two things in mere outward form, or in mere colour, or in some other single and separate quality out of many. The word 'assimilation' has, nevertheless, been

coined and appropriated by scientific men to express that complete, and infinitely complex, kind or degree of likening which is accomplished in living bodies by the processes of digestion and nutrition. But this is a kind and degree of likening which stands absolutely alone in Nature. It is a complete identification, not only in substance, but in structure. It is vastly more than mere incorporation, because at least an apparent incorporation takes place, for example, when a solid body is dissolved in a liquid, and in all cases of chemical combination. But organic assimilation, or the kind of assimilation which life alone effects, is vastly—even incomprehensibly—more than this. This lower kind and degree of incorporation is, indeed, involved in living growth, as an agency, and also as a means—as the cohesive power of lime in mortar is used in the building of walls, or as chemical affinities are used in the making of many artificial products. But living growth is an assimilation infinitely above, and beyond, this lower kind. It is indeed, first, a dissolving —but it goes on to be a reconstructive work; and the very essence of the structure is this—that it grows *for* the discharge of living, or organic, functions. And thus we are brought back, or awakened in consciousness, to the fact, that we cannot define life without using the same word itself, or its nearest equivalents, to explain to ourselves what the facts of Nature are as seen and expressed in speech. An organic structure is another word for a living structure; and a living structure is that kind of structure which alone is at once the visible seat, and the result, of life. In

chemistry we cannot analyze an elementary body: we can only describe its properties—its 'behaviour,' as chemists call it—towards other elements when brought into certain definite relations with them. And so it is with life. It is an elementary conception—one which resists analysis—as is clearly evidenced by the alternative to which we are reduced in trying to define it—the alternative either of omitting some of its essential properties, or else the alternative of using it as a known thing to define its own unknowable 'essence.'

Considering the many difficulties which beset us in understanding the world we live in, it is indeed a terrible thing to think that many of the most fundamental truths which we do most surely know, are in perpetual danger of being obscured and lost, by wrong methods of trying to increase our knowledge through bad definitions. Laborious efforts to cut out, or to sponge away, the records of mental vision which our race has left us in the rich inheritance of speech, seem to present an irresistible attraction to certain kinds of intellectual ambition. There could not be a more remarkable case of it than the case now before us. It is indeed a memorable fact that a man of such genius as Cuvier, should, under the influence of this temptation, have been led to conceive of life as, in its 'essence,' like to a whirlwind which draws particles of dust or of water into its vortex, and throws them out again as it passes on. For, be it observed, he does not merely use this meagre mechanical conception as a passing image or illustration of some

one very superficial aspect of life, but he dwells upon it, and comes back to it, as if it were in the nature of a real explanation of vitality in its essence, and in that most peculiar of all its manifestations—namely, organic structure. This structure, he suggests, is one to facilitate the rotatory circulation of gaseous and liquid forms of matter. Incompetent, and even grotesque, as this suggestion is when it is considered as a definition, or even as giving the vaguest conception of animal life and of organic structure, there is one element in it of high significance and value. But this element comes in, as it were, by accident—being introduced unconsciously in the implications of language, and of its words. Cuvier does not say that the vortex movement makes its own structure. What he does say is that the structure is essential to the maintenance of the movement; and this is true. But this conception at once, and of necessity, introduces the idea of an apparatus—that is to say, of a structure adapted to, and prepared for, the operation of the vortex movement which he represents as the essence of life.

The connexion of thought in Cuvier's mind is quite clear—in the highest sense quite natural, and consequently quite intelligible, and largely true. If, he says, we examine closely all diverse living bodies, we find in them a common structure—which structure a little reflexion will soon convince us, is 'essential to a vortex (*tourbillon*) such as the vital movement.' He had previously said that the 'form of this vortex is more essential than its matter.' He now drops the

word 'form,' and instinctively substitutes the word 'structure.' He does not seem at all conscious of the enormous difference between the two words. There may be a thousand things which have 'form,' but which have nothing that can be called structure. A whirlwind is a spiral movement in air, and a whirlpool is a spiral movement in water. A waterspout also is a spiral movement in air, a movement that takes, generally, a very definite form made visible by the aqueous matter that it picks up and spins round and round. But none of these forms of vortex movement have any structure—in the only sense in which we speak and think of it as characteristic of organic forms. The particles of dust or of water that are twisted about in a whirlwind or a waterspout, have no mutual relations in being built up, or even shaped, still less in being changed, into an apparatus. 'Form' and 'structure' therefore are two wholly different words, with a really boundless difference of meaning, and quietly and silently to substitute the one for the other is a perfect example of that unfaithfulness to facts which lies in the abuse of words. It is true that every structure must have an outward form; but the converse is not true—that every form must have an inward structure in the same sense. A picture, or a statue, has its very essence in a form, but it has no internal structure except that of the mere materials of paint or stone, and these are entirely non-essential, since a great variety of materials may be, and are, employed to take artistic forms. Cuvier, therefore, quite innocently and unconsciously passes not only from

one conception to another, but from one whole order and sphere of thought to another sphere completely different, when he substitutes the word 'structure' for the word 'form,' and proceeds to deal with them as identical or synonymous. A whirlwind may have a form, but it cannot have any structure in the sense in which we apply that word to organized or living bodies. In not seeing the world-wide difference between these two conceptions, this great genius, who cast such a new and brilliant light on the relationship between different organic forms, by a penetrating power of seizing on the lines of likeness and of difference, showed himself incompetent to classify with even tolerable correctness the product of his own perceptions in the stamped impression of his words. He looked upon, and argued upon, two things which are wide as the poles asunder—separated from each other by the whole width of possible conceptions—as things that could be brought under one category by the juggling use, for both of them indiscriminately, of one word, 'form.'

With some philosophers this kind of juggling is conscious and intentional. They wish, on principle, to expunge—now from one word, now from another—some essential element of meaning, because that meaning is incongruous with some theory or system of their own. This process of expunging they dignify with the name of abstraction, and are proud of it as a triumph in philosophy. But this is not the case of Cuvier. He fell into this juggling with words only because his attention had probably never been turned

to them as facts demanding all the discriminating care which he never forgot to bestow upon bones and skulls, or on any other of the facts of comparative anatomy. Yet in this case as in many others—and more in his case because of the innocence of his intentions—the power of language reasserts itself over him, and he finds himself wholly unable to proceed in his attempt to define life, without resorting to the use of words which bring him face to face with the real conceptions, and the real perceptions, which are stamped upon our intelligence when we contemplate organic structures as distinguished from any mere forms of lifeless matter. Thus when he says that a little reflexion will enable us to see that the 'common structure' recognizable in all living forms is essential to such a vortex as 'the vital movement,' he at once enters upon an explanation which is based upon our logical perception of the reason for a thing, as distinguished from our perception of its mere physical cause. 'It is necessary,' he says, 'for living bodies to have some solid parts *in order to* secure for them the necessary form, and also to have some fluid elements *in order to* maintain the movement[1]. Here we have at once the resort to, and the instinctive use of, words which express and reflect the perception, as a fact, of purpose and design. It is necessary, he sees, that some one thing, or a number of very complicated things, must be done, 'in order that' certain other results may be attained. This is the result—the inevitable result of 'reflexion'—that is to say, of

[1] *Le Règne Animale*, vol. i. p. 8.

the mind turning in upon itself, and faithfully reporting the facts of conscious perception which it finds there. This—no less than this—is the evidence which streams from the use by Cuvier of the words 'in order that' (*pour*), as the explanation of the vortex of life taking to itself a structure which he had been before tempted to speak of as a mere 'form,' comparable with the spiral rotation of a whirlwind.

Having once got upon this entirely different track of thought—having once entered on the only true explanation of organic structures which consists in our perception of the 'Why'—he is able to pursue his path of explanation into the region of the 'How.' But he only succeeds in that path, in proportion as he maintains, throughout, the same language of mentally perceived reasons as the final cause or explanation of physically perceived results. Words which carry on this meaning, and renew, as it were, its freshness of application, run throughout Cuvier's endeavour to explain the 'essence' of organic structures. Having identified one great object which it is necessary to attain, namely an adapted distribution of solids and liquids 'in order to' make a circulation possible, he goes on to the idea that 'therefore' (*donc*) such and such tissues are prepared. Now this, be it observed, is the pronounced language of teleology. But it is the only language capable of describing what his mind actually saw. It is language which at once reflects, and records, and reveals, a fact. Having got hold of this clue to an idea which is at last really in the nature of an explanation, Cuvier proceeds to apply

it to the various functions of the various parts of living structures—to the digestive, to the circulating, to the breathing, and to the exhaling apparatus—all of which, he points out, are characterized by their adaptation to meet some separate but intelligible need. Thus he explains that the solid parts are needed not only as mechanical supports for a definite form—not only to supply containing walls and channels for the liquids to be confined in, as well as to guide them in their movements, but he also points out, and explains, that these solids must not be rigid if the purposes of circulation are to be secured, but must be so far elastic as to be 'flexible' and 'dilatable'—so that the whole parts combined are co-operative in a common work. That necessary instrumentality is worked out through a complexity of structure both physical and chemical, which human language labours to find a sufficient number of words to indicate or express. This kind of structure, he explains, with all its tissues, adapted and co-operative, is, or constitutes, what we call organization[1].

All this is a splendid testimony to the wealth of meaning contained in that one word 'organization,' which many tongues use so glibly, with an almost complete forgetfulness of all that it implies. And although Cuvier's definition does contain the one essential conception of organization—that, namely, of it being an apparatus prepared for the doing of certain work, which work again is a necessity for the attainment of certain other ends, yet that definition, so far from

[1] *Le Règne Animale*, vol. i. p. 8.

exhausting the facts which prove that conception to be well founded, makes, after all, but a fractional selection of these facts out of a number and variety which science has not been yet, and probably will never be, able to enumerate. Thus, when we consider even roughly in its results, the work done in what abstractedly is called 'assimilation' or digestion, —when we remember, for example, that by that work the substance of common grass is built up, or rather is transmuted, into that other substance which we call beef, or venison, or some other kind of flesh, we must see that we are handling a word which expresses the profoundest mysteries in Nature, and that we are committing the grossest fraud on our own intellect and on the intellect of others, when we wipe out of such words as much as possible of their meaning, and misrepresent them by substituting for them some poor mechanical resemblance. Perhaps the inconceivable power of transmutation exerted by that which we call life—a power but feebly and inadequately expressed in the word 'assimilation'—is most conspicuous in the lower forms of organic structure which are elaborated by life in its lowest—that is in its vegetable—manifestations. The transmutation is most conspicuous in this case, because the materials which are so worked up and converted into new substances, are what may be called the raw materials of Nature in their rawest state. All animal structure is transmuted out of materials which have already been made up into organic combinations. But all vegetable structure—all fruits and flowers, all woods, and

vegetable tissues—are transmuted into new substances of exquisite beauty, directly from the bare elements of the atmosphere and the soil.

When we recollect these facts we shall see what a great duty is laid upon us in respect to words, not only to avoid weakening or degrading them, but to endeavour, as we can, to keep them up to the mark, and to cherish above all things the deepest and most penetrating conceptions which they imply. At their very best they are inadequate; they struggle—or rather we struggle in them—to convey impressions which, after all, are nothing more than a very small part of all that we can and do mentally perceive. To wipe out of them any of these perceptions is to draw down, as it were, a curtain over our own eyes—to blunt and to destroy the only instruments we have in our search for truth. Cuvier is himself quite innocent of any such intention, although in that endeavour to reach a superficial simplicity which is the great aim of laboured definitions, he loses hold, at moments, of the great central conception which his own words involve. Although he momentarily identifies life with the idea of a mere mechanical movement, or again with a variety of chemical reactions, he sees the glaring fact that, under the power of living organisms, the forces of chemical affinity are made to do work which is not only different from, but is opposed to, that which they can do under other conditions; and he draws the just conclusion that life cannot in itself be the product of that chemical affinity which it thus directs, overmasters, and employs. He sees, in short,

as Hunter did, that 'life is the cause and not the consequence of organization'; or rather he sees that the power or emanation which we call life, supposes the pre-existence of some higher power which determines all the future of certain germinal 'forms.' Life supposes the existence of these initial 'forms': it cannot be awakened, he says, except in connexion with them, that is to say, in organizations 'completely prepared' for it.

Here again, we have the final resort to a word which has immense and special implications. 'Prepared'—who does not see what this word involves? In the first place it involves the idea of time in a definite relation to a succession of foreseen events. In the second place, it involves the idea of that succession as one in which the present conditions are utilized for conditions which are future. But the only connecting link between these is Purpose, as we know it in ourselves, and as we thus recognize it in external Nature. Cuvier was quite as familiar as Darwin with the universal prevalence of 'development' in organic forms, as distinguished from 'making' in the sense of mechanical manufacture. The origin, or first 'birth' of organic forms, is, he says, the greatest mystery of Nature, since we never see the formation of a 'germ,' but only the development of germs already pre-existing and prepared. He believed, indeed, in what is called the 'constancy of specific forms'—meaning thereby that each germ develops into a specific organic structure, which is persistent, stable, continuous. This, indeed, was the very groundwork of

all his reasoning on those homologies of the fossil bones and skeletons which he was the first to establish and interpret. Nor, if it should be discovered—as assuredly it has not yet been discovered—that there is any definite law of development, by means of which one specific form can be generated out of another, would Cuvier's doctrine be traversed or refuted. For although he did not see any such law, yet, if it exists, it would still be subject to the higher and more fundamental law or conception on which he dwelt, namely this—that we never see, or can even conceive, the first formation of any germ, but only the separation of one from some parent previously existing. His words remain now as true as when he wrote them: 'the most profound thoughts, like the most delicate observations, do but end in the mystery of the pre-existence of germs.' Whether these germs are capable of themselves being so much further developed as to produce those varieties, which have the technical value of what is called a species in classification—this is a question of detail, important and full of interest indeed, but involving no doubt whatever on the primal conceptions expressed by the great comparative anatomist, when he does his very best to reach some fundamental definition of organic life.

It is most instructive to observe how the endeavour to make a definition, passes, insensibly but completely, into an endeavour to make an explanation, and how the whole idea of explanation becomes the idea of indicating the 'reason why' certain structures

must be prepared 'in order that' certain purposes may be attained. This language—this principle of thought—becomes more and more marked in proportion as he advances in his definitions to the higher forms of life—that is to say, from the vegetable, to the animal, world. Between these there are a great many things in common. The need of solid parts, the need of fluids, the need of the solids being arranged in channels, in order that circulation may be possible, the need of the vital force, whatever that in itself may be, to cause the circulation, the need of it to produce the inconceivably complex work of transmutation and respiration—all these are common to vegetable and to animal life. But when he comes to animals, Cuvier has to face the difficulty of defining that higher manifestation of life—the will—or what he calls 'spontaneity.' Before this difficulty he retreats by assuming, as well he may, that perception, and will, are incapable of any definition at all; that they are simple, elementary, conceptions which resist analysis, and are known to us as the ultimate facts of our own nature and experience. But there is one thing about them which, instinctively, he feels he can define, or at least explain—and that is why life, which is to be possessed of perception and of will, must be provided with a structure adapted for movement, and for intelligent direction. Spontaneity, he says, demands some essential modifications of structure, even in those parts of the animal structure which are, in respect to their individual work, 'simply vegetative'—that is to say, automatic and unconscious in their action. On this

principle of explaining why certain things should be provided, in order that certain other things should be brought about, he proceeds through the whole of his remarkable Introduction. It is not in the use of individual words, alone, that this principle of explanation is adopted. The whole structure of his sentences is moulded upon it—as representing the only medium through which the facts of Nature could be conceived at all in his own mind, or conveyed to the mind of others. It can hardly be said that it was deliberately adopted at all. It was the automatic impression made by external facts upon the receptive structure of Cuvier's mind. He could no more have abandoned it, or departed from it, than he could have abandoned the use of speech.

It is, moreover, well worthy of observation that the resources of language are largely drawn upon by Cuvier, in the frequent use of those special words which have been born of the teleological conceptions that are irresistibly impressed upon the mind by all close looking into the phenomena of Nature. We have seen how he passed from using the vague word 'form' to the much higher word 'structure,' and we are now to observe that he passes, again, from the word 'structure' as applied to organs, to the word 'function' as applied to the special work, in the animal economy, which that structure enables the finished organism to perform.

But such a word as 'function' is a volume in itself. The very existence of it is one of the most significant of all facts. It is a perfect photographic image of

one of the greatest of those otherwise invisible realities which were seen by him, when the sensitized surfaces of his genius were exposed to the light that streams from Nature. The 'function' of anything is not merely something else, or anything else, which it may happen to do. The function of a thing means that which it was specially adapted for doing, and was made to do. Thus, on the principle of explanation adopted by Cuvier, the function of bones is to give solidity—to preserve form—to sustain weight, and to give attachment to muscles. The function of veins and arteries, and of other tubular structures, is to provide channels for the circulation of fluids. The function of the digestive apparatus of vessels, is to perform the work of assimilation, in which work, according to the profound analogy which struck the mind of Cuvier, they represent, in function, the external roots of plants. In all these cases the word 'function' gathers up into itself, and embodies, the whole range of conceptions which are involved in Cuvier's principle and method of describing and defining living structures. The idea of preparation—the idea of that preparation having sole reference to a purpose lying in a future—the idea of that purpose being one in a chain of links all governed by the need for co-operative work in a combined design—all these ideas are the very essence of the meaning of the word 'function.' It represents the mind that is seen in natural facts, that mind being in itself the fact most especially impressed upon our own. Not, be it observed, that all animal or living structures are incapable of some

lower definitions and descriptions which are founded on some lower principle. They can all be defined and described, for example, according to their chemical composition, or according to the mechanical properties of their substance, or according to the embryotic elements in which they first appear, and out of which they are developed. This last aim and object of research—'histology'—has become very common in recent years, and in pursuing it some men seem to think they get very close indeed to the ultimate secret of living organisms. Yet it is most obviously, in itself, of very inferior rank in the hierarchy of our conceptions. The elements out of which organs are built up,—the mechanical or chemical properties which that building gives to them,—the earliest distinguishable parts in germs out of which they grow—all these have their own subordinate interest. But they all lie in the region of the How, whilst research into 'function' lies altogether in the higher region of the Why. Another superiority of function is well seen in the notorious fact, that one and the same substance, chemically, mechanically, and morphologically, may nevertheless have entirely separate functions in one and the same organism. The feathers of birds are a beautiful example of this diversity of use in purpose, coupled with identity in all the inferior categories of definition. The function of some feathers is that of warm clothing merely, for which purpose this substance is the most perfect in the world, owing to its non-conducting properties in respect to heat. The

function of other feathers is for the splendid and wonderful purpose of sustaining aerial flight, for which purpose a modification of the same substance supplies imperviousness to the passage of air, together with a combined maximum both of lightness and of elasticity; whilst yet another modification of the same substance, and of the same structure, discharges, in the 'auriculars' of birds, the opposite function of allowing the freest passage to air in the conveyance of sonorous vibrations to the auditory apparatus.

Such being the meaning of the word 'function,' the constant necessity of resorting to the use of it, in conveying to one mind the perceptions of another, is an indisputable witness to the highest element in these perceptions as a fact. It is not arrived at as the result of any argument; it does not represent an inference. It represents the direct perception of an objective existence. It is as much a 'seeing of that which is invisible,' as when we speak of any other conception in the region of intellectual, or moral, or religious, truth.

Still more obviously, although not more absolutely, does this character apply to another word much resorted to by physiologists, in describing living structures—namely, the word 'plan.' This is especially appropriated by those who attempt to describe what they see in comparing one organism as a whole with another as a whole, and especially in describing the correspondence of parts between the most diverse organic forms. But the word 'plan' refers to a kind of correspondence which is quite peculiar. It is

a correspondence which has no reference to likeness of material, or even to likeness in function. It is a correspondence in that purely mental conception or product which we call a plan, and for which there is no other word or name. We know it only as existing in ourselves, and we know it in others by the external indications which it produces. These we recognize, when we see them, as facts which are the vesture of the higher fact behind them. There are many other correspondences in Nature, to which we should never dream of applying the word 'plan,'—correspondences, for example, in colour, or in mere outward form, or in motion such as attracted the attention of Cuvier, in different forms of vortex movement. But no such correspondences are in the nature of a 'plan.' Neither do we usually, or indeed ever, apply the word 'plan' to any mere arrangement which is destitute of obvious or immediate utility, service, or intention. The arrangement of material, for example, in crystals of various kinds, is an arrangement very obvious, and very beautiful. But we do not naturally think or speak of any such arrangement as a plan. And why not? Simply because, as a matter of fact, the mind does not see in crystals that kind of arrangement which it means and knows by the word 'plan.' It may be—indeed it must be true—that the ultimate, or so called 'molecular' forces which work on matter, and which determine crystalline forms, are forces which have their use, and without which, perhaps, even nothing could be done. But no reason is obvious or known, why

different elementary substances should each have some separate and definite crystalline form—why sugar, and salt, and water, should all take their own particular shape, when they solidify from solutions. Exquisite as these forms are in many cases, definite and determined as we know them to be by natural laws, they never strike us as in the nature of a plan, and we never speak of them or think of them in this connexion. Crystals have no structure in the organic sense. They are cases of aggregation merely, of the mere cohesion of identical particles according to a particular pattern.

Let us, therefore, clearly understand each other, and above all let us understand ourselves, in this matter. Let us be honest with our own minds when we find ourselves driven to the use of words which have implications of special depth and value. Is it, or is it not, in these very implications that the whole force of them lies? Is it not precisely because of these implications that we find them to be not only useful but even necessary? If so, let us treat them as what they are, as the very highest and truest intimations we can receive from Nature, as coming to us through channels of approach, which the finest and most faithful of the organs by which we apprehend the realities of the system in which we live. Nor could there be a better illustration of this than the circumstances in which the great mind of Cuvier finds itself under the necessity of resorting to the use of the word 'plan.' He does not resort to it at all so long as he is confining himself to the definition

of life in the most simple, and therefore in the most abstract, of its outward manifestations. What he does when he is concerned with no higher aim than this, is, as we have seen, to use other forms of speech which do indeed imply the conception of a plan, but which do not give to that conception its own definite and proper name.

The essential idea conveyed in the word 'plan' is the idea of some voluntary action, taken by some voluntary agent, with a view to secure some ulterior mental purpose or design. It may be the plan embodied in the simplest weapon, in the preparation of a spearhead out of flint, or of a bow and arrow cut out of the boughs and branches of a tree, or of a vessel out of clay, or of a fish-hook out of a shell, or of a net out of vegetable fibre. Or it may be the more complicated plans which arise from the growth of civilized needs, such as the plan of a house, or the plan of a military campaign, or the plan of a great ship. The embodiments of 'plan' are endless, but in every one of them the root idea of the word is the same. It is the idea of some mental purpose formed, and of some action taken, in pursuance of its intention or its aim. This idea may inspire the whole grammatical construction of a sentence without the word 'plan' being used at all. Accordingly, we see how completely this is the case with Cuvier's attempts to describe the phenomena of life in its most abstract characteristics. The idea animating his whole language is this—that, in order that some result may be attained, it is necessary that such and such a structure should be

provided. If some definite form is to be kept, some solid framework must be suppled. If liquids are to be contained, some vessels must be prepared for holding them. If fluids are to circulate, those vessels must be partly tubular to direct and guide the stream—and so on, and so on. But the moment we attend to this structure of sentence, we see that it is in itself a channel with containing walls for the circulation and application of one steady stream of thought, namely, that which assumes that whatever is reasonably required for certain purposes, must accordingly be provided, and therefore have appeared.

But whence this connexion between a reasonable argument, and an actual, physical, supply? What is it but the connexion of a mind with creative conceptions, making itself manifest in creative power? The English word 'because' marks, as no other word does, the insensible steps of thought by which we pass, often quite unconsciously, from the Why to the How, from the reason of a thing, to its physical cause. 'Because' means both 'by the means of,' and also 'by reason of.' When we say that the snow melts because the temperature has risen, we speak of a purely physical cause—we mean that snow must melt if the temperature rises above 32° Fahrenheit, or zero in the scale of Reaumur. But when we say that we shoot a deer or a grouse because we want food, we mean by the word 'because,' that a certain motive impelled us to the act. And it is curious to observe that the idea of purely physical causation is so subordinate an element in our conceptions generally, that in common

parlance the word 'because' is much more frequently used to give an explanation of the reason why things are done, than of the physical causes—the how—through which they are brought about. Cuvier's language about living structures is entirely moulded on this conception of things being done by reason of their necessity for certain corresponding results. And so when he comes to feel the necessity of summing up all this reasoning in the shorthand notation of a single word, he suddenly awakes, as it were, to his own meaning in all he had said before, and to the transition from one order of thought to another which it implies. Accordingly he introduces the word 'plan' with a sort of apology to himself and his readers in the formula 'so to speak' (*pour ainsi dire*). He seems quite unconscious that in reality he has been 'so speaking' through many previous pages, and that the only change he is making is to substitute one expressive and comprehensive word for the elaborate equivalents he had been dealing in before.

And now let us observe when it is, and how it is, that Cuvier finds himself compelled to quit these equivalents, and to use, at last, the definite and appropriate word. It is when he passes from the abstract, to the concrete, in his description and definition of living forms; it is when his mind comes into closest contact with the facts of Nature, and tries hardest to convey to other minds that which his own penetrating genius makes plain to him. It is, in short, when he passes from dealing with the generalities which all animal structure implies, and when he undertakes to

expound the specialities of structure on which the subordinate classification of animal forms must depend. He says that in considering the animal kingdom on the principles he now laid down—that is, according to their adapted or organized structure—and casting aside mere circumstances which are accessory or subordinate—we shall find that there exist only four great leading forms of such structures. It is to these forms that he first applies the name of 'plan.' 'There are,' he says, 'as it were, four general plans.' 'After these forms, or upon them,' he goes on to explain, 'all animals seem to have been modelled.' And all the subdivisions which naturalists had established were nothing more than slight modifications of these four fundamental plans, due to the development or additions of certain parts, which modifications 'in no way change the essence of the plan[1].'

The lines of division drawn by Cuvier between these four plans have not been found to be quite sufficient, since the progress of biological science has been more advanced. Supplementary lines of division have had to be added—not only in the nature of subdivisions, but in the nature of, and of the same rank as, some of those which are indicated by him. But not only does the principle on which he drew those lines remain untouched, but the particular points along which he drew them remain in some cases as fixed as ever. The divisions he established were, first, the Vertebrata — creatures with an internal skeleton framed on the plan of a central longitudinal

[1] *Le Règne Animale*, p. 29.

bony axis enclosing the brain and the nerve-trunk. Second, the Mollusca—creatures all soft, and with no bony skeleton at all, such as shell-fish. Third, the Articulata, represented by all insects. And, fourthly, the creatures, such as Starfishes, in which the bilateral arrangement gives place to another plan—that of organs radiating from a centre—a division to which Cuvier gives the name of Radiata.

It is when we contemplate the enormous variety and range of living forms which are included under each of these plans of structure, that we begin to estimate, with some distant approach to an adequate appreciation, the wonderful wealth of resources which lie hid and undeveloped, for example, in the vertebrate plan of structure. In all the plans which men can form, whether in mechanical invention, or in the conduct of affairs, the range of our purpose is comparatively narrow. If the mechanism we may invent, or if the scheme of conduct we may form, attains the immediate end we have in view, we are well content; and if other and secondary benefits are found to follow, these we consider as accidental, however fortunate. But in that living plan of structure—the Vertebrate—which we identify as one and the same in a vast series of animals, we see that by slight modifications of some one, or some few, of its elementary or fundamental parts, these parts have had a potential adaptability to varieties of life and function which are of the widest dissimilarity. The Vertebrate arrangement is seen, as a fact, to be equally adaptable to flying in the air, and to burrow-

ing in the ground, and to swimming in the waters, and to any degree and kind of movement in these very different scenes of life. The mole and the bat, the whale and the humming-bird, creatures aerial and creatures earthly, creatures swift and creatures slow, the quick hare and the creeping tortoise, the rapid horse and the sluggish newt, and a thousand other creatures equally discrepant, are all ranged or classified together because of the fact that the framework of their bodies, however utterly dissimilar in outward form, in habits of life, in aptitudes and powers, in food, in home or sphere of action, is nevertheless made on that one same plan of structure, the basis of which is a vertebral column and a skull, with appendages all occupying the same relative place, however different may be their function or their use.

This doctrine of Cuvier has been elaborated since his time. Indeed, during his own life, and even before the age of his great celebrity, some of the most far-reaching and profound of its applications had flashed, about the same time, on two great minds, the poet Goethe and the physiologist Oken, in their recognition of the skull of all the Vertebrates, as structurally, or in plan, nothing else than a largely developed and modified vertebra. Cuvier himself never did accept many identifications of this kind, which he seems to have considered fanciful and transcendental. But the fundamental doctrine he laid down in the passage above quoted, is independent of all disputes about a few of the specific or detailed applications of it. It has been followed and

illustrated in many details, and has been thoroughly established as indisputably moulded on the facts of Nature. It never had escaped altogether the instinctive and unconscious perceptions of the human mind. On the contrary, it had been universally recognized and expressed in the universal forms of human speech. The correspondence between our various organs which are the most conspicuous—our heads, our limbs, and our backbones—with the same parts in the lower animals, was a correspondence universally seen, and handled in familiar words. But Cuvier carried the idea much farther, and established it as the scientific conception of a universal law; and no subsequent investigations have gone beyond the principle of his grand generalization that 'we can follow the degradations (gradations) of the same plan from man to the lowest fish[1].'

In the expression of this conception, for the conveyance of its essential idea from one mind to another, a new word has since been invented, as usual out of old materials, and by the application of ideas long familiar to this newly perceived embodiment. And what was the new word? It was taken from that language which is the richest in the world for the expression of abstract conceptions, moulded, as it was, on the thoughts of the most thoughtful and intellectual race which has ever represented the mind of man. Some word was wanted to express an idea which, though not wholly new as a vague impression, was practically new as a sharply

[1] *Le Règne Animale*, p. 29.

defined conception. That conception was not one of mere likeness, whether in shape or in use, but of sameness or identity in the elements of an arrangement of parts, which arrangement was for a purpose, or rather for many purposes, and was therefore essentially a plan, or an ideal structure framed for ulterior ends. And so the word 'Homology' came to be coined, as a combination of the two words in Greek which represent sameness or identity, and reason in the highest senses in which that word can be used. Two bones, or two elements in one bone, are said to be 'homologous' with each other, not because they may be like in shape or in function, but because they are seen to be so placed as to be identical in their ideal relation to the skeleton as an ideal whole. We all know the high place occupied by the word Logos in the history of human thought, how it came to express the highest attributes of mind, even in the Supreme. Yet this is the word—no poorer a word would do—now admitted and adopted by the scientific world as the only proper and adequate expression of that kind of sameness which exists, for example, between the bones of the swimming paddle of the whale, or the grubbing paw of the mole, and the long slender bones between which the leathery wings of the bat are stretched for the purposes of flight.

There can be no better illustration, therefore, than this word 'homology,' of the automatic evidence and record which language contains of the intellectual impressions made by Nature upon the human mind,

when that mind is compelled, or induced, to read off what is written indelibly on its own sensitized and receptive surfaces. It is an illustration all the more valuable because men have been obliged, by the progress of biology as a science, to form a new word for the purpose of this reading off, or report upon, the facts as intellectually perceived; and thus an opportunity has been afforded of escaping, if it was possible to do so, from a faithful transcript, and of inventing some other word or form of speech, which might leave out, drop, or obliterate, such part of the record as grated on the ear of special philosophical theories and preconceptions. But practically this has been found impossible; and so we possess, enshrined in the very language of modern biological science, a fundamental word which embalms in an everlasting form the great idea of living structures being all moulded on a mental plan, and this too in a sense so definite, so tangible, and so clear, that every bone and every rudiment of a bone, and even in some cases the absence of a bone, can be referred with certainty to one ideal plan, susceptible of almost endless modifications for the fitting discharge of special functions.

And now let it be noted that this persistency of general pattern in the organic framework of living creatures, through such a wide and various range of being—although it is a great mystery as regards the How—can hardly be said to be any mystery at all as regards the Why. The very fact of the immense adaptability of this plan to various uses, proves in-

disputably that it is founded on some inherent necessity for meeting certain physical, and chemical, and galvanic, conditions which are concerned in the machinery of organic life. And on this principle of explanation, which is the principle adopted by Cuvier, it is not difficult to see the reason, however difficult it may be to trace the physical causes, of the vertebrate plan. The seat, the centre, and the throne of vitality —whatever in itself this may be—is identified above all things with the nervous system. It is the nerves which animate the whole frame, with the brain as their great reservoir, and the spinal cord as their great trunk and root. All their branches ramify from these, and they are the channels of that energy by which life and movement is conveyed to every part. It is easy to see the reason why the larger nerve-centres must be specially protected. The substance of which they are composed is of the softest and most delicate consistency, as well as of the most tender molecular structure. Some bony structure, or containing walls, are absolutely needed to protect the brain from external injury, and the same mechanical necessity applies to the spinal cord, which is a prolongation of the same substance. The brain-box is therefore rigid, but if the protecting tube of the spinal column were equally rigid, movement would be impossible, or would be restricted within the narrowest limits. The jointed structure of the vertebra is thus perfectly explained on the principle of its being a plan for the meeting of certain necessary conditions, which are in themselves insuperable.

They can be met and managed, but they cannot be overborne.

Owen, in his work on the *Homologies of the Vertebrate Skeleton* (1848), has investigated this great subject with the immense advantage of not writing under any theoretical or philosophical preconceptions which could induce him to reject any intimation from external Nature, or to mutilate the language in which his own intellectual nature instinctively led him to clothe the impression made by them. He makes, indeed, little or no use of the mere word—plan. 'Type' is the word he chiefly uses to express the same idea; type, meaning that sort of arrangement of material which indicates a definite pattern, after which, or according to which, the different parts of a structure are arranged. He tells us that 'his studies in Comparative Anatomy had led him to see the evidences of a greater conformity to type, especially in the bones of the head of the vertebrate animals, than the immortal Cuvier had been willing to admit[1].' He points out the great distinction between mere analogy and homology. Analogy refers to mere similarity in respect to use or function; homology refers solely to identity or sameness of place, or position, in a common structure. Parts which are homologous in two animals may or may not be also analogous in the use to which they are put. Very often the two classifications agree; but very often also they disagree. For example, there is a little lizard which can fly, but its flying organ is

[1] *Homologies, &c.*, Advertisement.

not its fore-limbs, but a membrane stretched all down its side from the fore-limbs to the hind-limbs. This is to a certain extent, for the purposes to which it is applied, analogous to the wing of a bird; but it is not homologous with that wing; because the wing of the bird, like the wing of the bat, is the forearm of the creature specially adapted for flight. On the other hand, the fore-fin of the flying fish is both analogous and homologous with the wing of the bird, because it is both that part of the fish which corresponds to the forearm or foreleg in other Vertebrates, and it is also put to something like the same use of sustaining flight through the air. Owen, moreover, makes a much more significant distinction in his definition of homology—a distinction which at first sight may seem too subtle to be of any practical value even in classification, still more in philosophy. But when we come to grasp it, this distinction is full of meaning. Parts in a common plan, or pattern, or type of structure which do really correspond with, or are homologous with, each other, are also identical in their origin, that is to say, they grow or are developed in the egg or germ in the same order, by a strictly similar process, and out of the same parts of the germ, as soon as any parts become visibly separated from each other at all. Now, Owen throws out this kind of similarity from his definition of homology, quite as decidedly as he throws out mere similarity in functional use, or in shape, or in substance, or in any other comparatively superficial points of view. The relationships of homology, he insists upon it,

'are mainly, if not wholly, determined by the relative position and connexion of the parts, and may exist independently of form, proportion, substance, function, and similarity of development[1].' Owen does not point out this distinction in connexion with any argument or in support of any theory. He simply points out as a fact in Nature that certain bones, for example, in the skull of man and of fishes, which bones are certainly homologous—that is to say, are corresponding or answerable parts in the common type or pattern of skull structure—are nevertheless not developed in the same way, or out of the same embryo materials. Owen specifies, as another case of the same principle, that one leg-bone in a cow is certainly homologous with the corresponding bone in the leg of a crocodile, although in the cow it is a single bone developed from one centre of ossification, whilst in the crocodile it is a composite bone, built up by the coalescence of no less than 'four separate ossific centres[2].' But when the coalescence of these four separate bits of bone has been effected, then the united bone is none the less the homologue of the leg-bone of the cow by reason of the fact that it then takes its exactly corresponding place in the number and arrangement of leg-bones in these two widely separated creatures.

The scientific value of every fact in Nature is in proportion as it suggests some thought. Now what is the kind of thought suggested by the fact that corresponding or homologous parts in one common

[1] *Homologies, &c.*, p. 9. [2] *Ibid.* p. 5.

plan of structure are nevertheless sometimes, or often, built up in different ways, when we look to their origin in the development of germs? Clearly the thought suggested is this—that pattern, or plan, or type of general structure must, somehow, be one of great importance, since means so complicated are employed in adhering to it, in following it, in the building up of all skeletons according to it. The principle of Cuvier's explanation of all animal structure is, as we have seen, and as Owen expresses it, 'the subserviency of the parts so determined to similar ends in different animals.' But Owen himself is staggered by the numerous facts which show that actual use, or functional duty, cannot be always directly connected with this conformity to one pattern or plan of structure. He instances the case of the human skull being built up by the coalescence of a great number of small bones with separate points of origin, whilst the utility which has been shown to arise from this structure is the consequent compressibility which facilitates the processes of birth. But then he also points out the fact that in birds the skull is built up also of precisely the same number of originally separate bones, whilst this structure is in them absolutely divorced from all reference to utility of the same kind, seeing that there is no such use in a birth by the cracking of an eggshell. And yet, he says, the alternative conclusion that such homologies, such identities in a common structure, are 'matters of chance, is a conclusion which will be entertained by no reasonable mind[1].' Owen, therefore, takes refuge

[1] *Homologies, &c.*, p. 73.

in the general abstract conception of an organic conformity to some higher type 'on which it has pleased the Divine Architect to build up certain of these diversified living works.' With this explanation Owen is satisfied—at least in the meantime. It is, of course, an explanation which shows his entire freedom from any theory or philosophic dogma adverse to the immediate perception of mind in Nature. It fully admits and includes all the implications which are involved in the word 'plan,' or other feebler equivalents, such as type or pattern, as obviously applicable to organic structure. But, on the other hand, it is no explanation at all in the sense of any answer either as to the How or the Why. It refers us, indeed, back to some act of a supreme Will, but it does not even profess to suggest any explanation either as to the instrumentality employed, or as to the reason for so employing it. It is a purely arbitrary Will that is invoked, a will without an aim or a purpose, and without even the suggestion of any reason. But this is more inconceivable than that which we call chance, and Owen expressly excludes mere chance as an alternative which can be entertained by any reasonable mind. But 'chance' is not a word which means the absence of purely physical causes. In this sense no such thing as chance exists or is even conceivable. Nobody doubts for a moment that the falling of dice, when thrown, is always due to some cause. What we mean by chance is the determination of any event by causes absolutely undirected by a reasonable mind. The abstract con-

ception of mere adherence to a type, some law of mechanical conformity to a pattern, as in itself a reasonable motive of a reasonable mind, is a conception not only quite as irrational as pure chance, but a great deal more so. What indeed may be meant and what, unperceived, is probably really meant by such language as Owen here employs, is a very different thing—namely this, that 'conformity to type' is in itself a purpose governed by an aim which is wholly unknown to us. This is a perfectly reasonable conception, and if we have to submit to it as ultimate, and admitting of no further investigation, it may indeed leave us dissatisfied and restless; but it does not leave us confounded, or with faculties outraged by any denial of the legitimacy of their aspirations, and of the very existence of that for which they seek. It is one thing to teach that the reason of any phenomena in Nature is beyond our reach, and quite another thing to teach that there is no such thing as a reason to be sought after at all.

It is, however, satisfactory to find that the facts of Nature, and especially the facts of a unity of structure in all the Vertebrates, do not leave us in this position of being utterly helpless to see any possible reason, however much convinced we may be that some good reason must nevertheless exist. Another set of facts quite as certain, and far more obvious, even at first sight, than the facts establishing unity of structural plan, establish also a concurrent adaptation or adaptability to special functional uses. What is quite certain is that the one set of facts does not interfere

with the other. On the contrary, they are inseparably interwoven, only in such a manner that two homologous parts in two separate animals may be, and often actually are, applied to totally dissimilar uses. For example, the vertebral column ends in all the Vertebrata in some form of tail, whether it be highly developed or almost wholly suppressed. Totally wanting it never is. Even in man it is represented by six well-developed caudal vertebrae as terminal bones. But in no class of Vertebrates, except one, is this end of the vertebral column used as a locomotive organ. In some monkeys, indeed, it is made to be prehensile, and by taking hold of the branches of trees it greatly helps the limbs in taking the swinging leaps which are most useful in an arboreal life and habitat. But in one great class of Vertebrates—the class of fishes—the end of the vertebral column, furnished with an appended fin, is the one great locomotive organ of the whole of them ; and, what is still more remarkable, it is devoted to the same use in a large number of other and higher Vertebrates which have to live and move in the same medium—water. In all these creatures the bones or parts which are homologous with the four limbs in other Vertebrates, are reduced in size, sometimes to a mere rudiment, and are in all cases mere adjuncts for locomotive purposes to the one great propelling organ, the tail. The same principle of the special adaptation of identical parts, as regards the general plan, to uses and purposes of the widest difference, is a principle which runs throughout the whole organic

world. Finger-bones are suppressed and glued together to support the flying feathers in birds. They are shortened and thickened to give burrowing strength in the mole. They are elongated and attenuated to support with elasticity a flying membrane in the bat—and so on through an endless variety of cases, where the one fundamental vertebrate plan has all its several parts turned to separate uses, without ever losing their traceable, and often obvious, identity with each other as corresponding, or answerable, parts in relation to the structure as a whole.

In the light of these admitted facts it is not easy to see how the principle of Cuvier's explanation of organic structure, should appear inapplicable or insufficient, merely because, in some cases, or even in a thousand cases, we may discover particular features in the common plan, which do not seem to stand in connexion with any immediate use to the particular species possessing them. What we do see most clearly in the vertebrate series as a whole, is the almost infinite plasticity of its fundamental plan, the pliability of all its parts to some use—actual or potential—in some one animal or another, so that what seems quite useless in some cases becomes very often not only useful but even essential in other members of the same great class or sub-kingdom among living things. If this be the fact, as it most unquestionably is, then the principle of Cuvier's explanation not only stands good, but it is raised to a higher level, and endowed with a larger and wider

significance. It shows that the vertebrate type or plan of structure has in it always a potential, in addition to an actual use, not only as a whole, but in all its separate parts. Thus the first of the five fingers which is the typical number of digits in all the Vertebrates, and is of little or no special use in any of the lower animals, becomes at once the most essential and characteristic of the parts which raise the paw or foot of the beast into the hand of man. Thus also with the same digit in the foot, it becomes the one essential fulcrum by which man keeps his erect position. The illustrations of this principle are endless, and no fact of comparative anatomy, nor any conception founded on its facts, is more certain or more significant than this universal adaptibility of all the parts of the vertebrate skeleton to various forms and kinds of use, as these have arisen in time, and in the course of that development which its plan has, somehow, undergone.

Accordingly we find that the mind of Owen, just like the mind of Cuvier, does, in the progress of his own most interesting treatise, come round by another route to the recognition of the same ultimate principle of explanation which was the only one conceivable to the great French naturalist. Owen does not, because he cannot, rest in the abstract idea of a mere conformity to type as the only explanation of the homologies he has traced. The subordination of this plan or pattern of structure to special adaptation in one particular but most salient case, is thus expressed by Owen: the 'high characteristics of the

human arm and hand are manifested by the subordination of each part to a harmonious combination of function with one another[1].' And summing up the reflections which are inevitably suggested by the detailed analysis of parts and functions, he says: 'The satisfaction felt by the rightly constituted mind must ever be great in recognizing the fitness of parts for their appropriate functions; but when this fitness is joined, as in the great toe of the foot of men and the ostrich, by a structure which, at the same time, manifests a harmonious concord with a common type, the power of the one great Cause of all organization is appreciated as fully, perhaps, as it is possible to be by our limited intelligence[2].' From the wording of this passage it is not quite clear whether, in Owen's mind, the apparent necessity of conforming to one type of structure was regarded as a help, or as a hindrance, in the creative work of special development and adaptation. The idea of the creative power being more striking in this point of view than in any other, would rather seem to indicate that conformity to type was regarded by him as an obstacle to be overcome by extraordinary power. But the opposite idea, of a typical form of fundamental structure being in itself a reservoir of potential adaptability, is the conception which best corresponds with the facts of Nature, and carries back to the farthest conceivable extent the one great idea of method as always subservient to foresight and design.

[1] *Homologies*, p. 196. [2] *Ibid.* p. 197.

It is important to remember that this idea leaves untouched the whole question of the physical causes through the agency of which the method is pursued. That the ordinary physical forces, as well as the ordinary physical elements of what we call matter, are concerned in the building up of all organic structures, there can be no doubt whatever. But when yoked to the service of that which we only know as life or vitality, these physical forces do what they never do in any other service. There is a wide gulf between the organic and the inorganic world, and our language and ideas are very apt to be self-deceptive when we speak of chemical affinity, or of galvanic or polar forces, as concerned in producing any vital phenomena. That they are concerned in some way is indeed certain. But the subordination to some master power, under which they work, is as conspicuous as their presence in that subordinate capacity. How far we can attribute to them anything of the rigidity and uniformity of effects, which are characteristic of the work done by the physical forces when not so subordinated, is a very difficult and a purely speculative question. Nevertheless it is impossible not to suspect that possibly the tool-mark, as it were, of the physical forces may be traced in the mechanical arrangements of parts according to a definite pattern. This is a common effect of the physical forces acting on ponderable matter, as in the formation of crystals, and in other analogous phenomena. Owen is attracted by an idea of this kind, and suggests it as a possible clue to the linear

arrangement and repetition of like parts in the vertebral column, and in what he calls the 'vegetative repetition' of segments, and of serial parts, in plants. But there is this tremendous and fundamental difference between any repetition of like parts in an organism, and every repetition of like parts in the geometric forms of crystals, or in the arrangement which inorganic dust takes under the discharges of electricity—that in the organic world every bit and fragment of the material employed has, not merely a molecular constitution in the chemical sense, but also always an internal structure which is organic, that is to say, which is constructed on a plan with a view to farther growth, and to adaptation for the discharge of function. Therefore, in our guesses and speculations as to the physical forces employed in building up organic structures, we must take care to place ourselves under the severest discipline of mind, so as to avoid confounding things which are essentially distinct, things, indeed, which are separated from each other by the whole width of conceivable existence.

Whatever life or vitality may be in its ultimate source and nature, it is certainly a power which makes the physical forces perform a kind of work which they never perform in the world of the not-living. But so long as we keep firm hold of this fact, and of the corresponding idea of a mere subordinate instrumentality as essentially their position in organic structure, then, indeed, it is possible for us to think without self-deception of the physical forces of attraction, repulsion, and polarity, as concerned in the

disposal of organized matter along lines of deposit, and in segments, and according to definite patterns or types of arrangement. This becomes most easily conceivable in the case of certain animal forms of the lowest kind, such as many animals belonging to Cuvier's great division, the Radiata. Owen tells us that in the starfishes we can detect the mineral, lime, out of which their shell is constructed, taking the characteristic crystalline form which belongs to it in the inorganic world. And, indeed, the very idea of a radiated arrangement of material is one which suggests the agency of such crystalline forces as determine the exquisite stellate forms which are common among crystals. There are none more beautiful than those of common water when it is frozen or solidified in flakes of snow. It is quite possible, it may even be probable, that this analogy may be a true one—an analogy which indicates a real connexion between like effects, so far as mere arrangement of material is concerned. But the moment we attempt to push this analogy one hair's-breadth beyond the idea of purely mechanical arrangement, the attempted explanation breaks down completely. It becomes a pure self-deception, and may very easily be converted into a sophistry. There are, perhaps, no animal forms existing in the world, in which the merely mechanical arrangement of separate parts is made more strikingly subservient to an organic use than in the forms of many marine animals. The wonderful beauty, as to mere form, which we appreciate in snow crystals, gives way to another

kind of beauty not less grateful to the eye, and far more satisfying to the mind. No utility is seen, or is perhaps conceivable, in the crystalline forms of snow. But in the calcareous plates of the Echini, or Sea-urchins, elaborated as they are by the work of living matter which is as formless as a pure jelly, we see a method and a plan for overcoming a great mechanical difficulty, namely, the problem how to reconcile the possibility of expansion and growth with a hard external shell of definite size and shape, and made of a rigid material. When we have grasped —which it is not very easy to do—all the purely mechanical difficulties which the solution of this problem involves, and when we come to see some, at least, of the complex contrivances by which those difficulties are met and overcome, the exclamation 'how beautiful,' which the mind must utter in thought, if not in words, is transferred from the loveliness of the mere radiate arrangement of plates and spines, to the comparatively hidden intellectual beauty of the special adaptation to development, growth, and function, which is as conspicuous as it is wonderful in the whole structure.

If, again, we can trust our own minds to keep a firm footing on the slippery slopes of an imperfect analogy, there is another group in the animal world in the structure of which we may well imagine that we can almost see and touch the direct agency of the physical forces in the arrangement of a house of life. That group is constituted by the Sponges. In those with which we are most familiar, the horny sponges, there is little or no beauty of form, although there is a most

wonderful beauty of adaptation to a very special function. In that function lies their usefulness to man —these sponges being the only one of the animal series so low in the scale of life which has any economic use for him. That use lies in the truly extraordinary power they possess of holding water in channels and passages of their substance, through the subordinated force of capillary attraction. The only explanation of this structure is an explanation framed on the principle adopted by Cuvier. That principle seizes on the fact of some absolute need which must be met, and points to the necessity of providing for it by the construction of some definite apparatus. The animal life of sponges is maintained by the digestion of food contained in the currents of sea water, and an ever fresh and continuous supply of those currents is therefore a necessity of life to sponges. It is to meet this want or need that the complicated porosity of the spongy skeleton is devised, and in ordinary sponges there is no obvious symmetry or beauty in the arrangement of the innumerable orifices through which the water is sucked up and passed. There is, however, another division of the sponges which are of no economic use to man, but which possess a skeleton of such wonderful beauty and complexity, that the contemplation of them fills every eye that looks upon them with astonishment and admiration. These are the silicious sponges, whose skeletons are composed of glass, woven and spun into forms of the most exquisite patterns. The function or use of those astonishing structures is less

obvious at first sight than in the structure of the horny or leathery sponges, although on reflection we see that they are all referable to the same great mechanical need, namely, that of providing channels of access through which currents of water may be brought into contact with the internal surfaces of the vital and digesting jelly of the animal.

But when we fix our attention on that which is indeed most conspicuous, namely, the exquisite regularity and beauty of the patterns assumed by the glassy matter of the skeleton, we cannot help feeling that what may be called the sub-agency of the physical forces is at once suggested to the mind. The Why is quite clear; and the How is in a measure unusually probable. The arrangement of the glassy rods and spiculae, according to numerical groups, and according to angles of position, is an arrangement which reminds us a good deal of the arrangements which are determined by the crystallizing forces in mineral matter. For example, there is one arrangement of the glassy elements characterized by the number six, just as some minerals and other substances crystallize in forms which are hexagonal. So prominent is this number in the pattern of this group of sponges, that naturalists have chosen it as the basis of their classification in respect to genuine characters. The group is called the Hexitenellidae, which may be translated as the six-stitched sponges. The wonderful beauty which results in these forms is quite indescribable in words. In one of the splendid volumes of the *Report of the*

Challenger Expedition, they can be seen and studied in delineations which more than exhaust all the words in which we can express the sense of beauty. But be it observed that, although these wonderful forms are, in some points of view, eminently suggestive of the action of the polar or crystalline forces, the product, not only as a whole and considered as an apparatus, but in all its separate elements, has characters which distinguish both the whole and all its parts from the inorganic world. In the first place, even the initial process of segregating out of sea-water the infinitesimally small amount of soluble silex which it contains, is in itself an essentially vital operation. Chemical and galvanic forces are, no doubt, concerned, and even decaying animal matter may sometimes determine the deposition of soluble matter from the sea. But the selection or segregation of silex, and the deposit of it along certain definite lines of structure, is an operation in which the mere chemical and polar forces, if they are employed at all, are seen working in strict subordination to a vital end. Then, in the next place, the forms of the elementary spiculae of these wonderful sponges are forms never seen except as the product of that power which we call organic. It is true that they are rigid, largely though not uniformly rectilinear, and the patterns they assume are often geometric. But, on the other hand, they have curved and, as it were, ornamental terminations, which remind us rather of the form of some flowers, such as the Flench 'fleur-de-lis.' The pattern of a cross is very largely used. The fundamental form in all the six-

rayed sponges seems to be that of three straight rays crossing each other at right angles. But this is modified in various ways in different species, and for different organic uses. The pattern of an anchor is wonderfully common, and it appears to be connected with the same functional use as that to which the human implement is applied. In short, the inorganic or physical forces, although they here obtrude upon us more in some aspects than in most other animal structures, are manifestly mere servants under the control and direction of vitality, doing, under that direction, what they are nowhere else seen doing in the inorganic world.

We must be on our guard, upon this subject, against the subtle effects of theoretical preconceptions, whether in ourselves or others. Any disposition or desire to reduce the phenomena of life to the same level as the phenomena of the physical forces, operates powerfully in the direction of leading us to exaggerate the likeness between true crystalline forms and those organic forms which are merely, in some ways, like them. Professor Haeckel, whose bias in this direction cannot be disputed, has invented a new word, or rather a new compound of words, in order to reconcile the facts, as far as possible, with the two diverse conceptions of organic, as distinguished from inorganic, work. He calls the work done in sponges ' bio-crystallization,' which is a sort of verbal compromise between the idea of ordinary mineral crystallization, and the very different organic products of the living protoplasm of the creature. But this

mere verbal hybrid casts no light upon the subject, unless it be interpreted as meaning some force vaguely analogous to crystallization, which is wielded by vitality. 'Triaxial' and 'tri-radiate' are the words employed to designate this theoretically, or ideally, fundamental form. Haeckel's own language, when he attempts to explain his compound word, shows that the plastic or directing power is conceived as resident in the living matter, and if this be so, the part played by the crystalline forces can only be purely instrumental and subordinate. He speaks of the 'bio-crystals occupying a medium position between an inorganic crystal and an organic secretion, and in their origin expressing a compromise between the crystallization of the lime (or silex) and the formative activity of the fused cells of the syncytisum[1].' When we cross-question this language it appears at once that the only definite idea it contains is the idea of the vital activity being the origin and the cause of the forms imposed upon the materials supplied, and the image of a 'compromise' taken from the analogy of two human disputants or antagonists, is plainly a misleading metaphor.

On the other hand, Professor Schulze of the University of Berlin, to whom, as the foremost authority on the subject, the task was entrusted of drawing up the 'Report on the Sponges taken by the Challenger Expedition,' has, in that splendid Monograph, declared his conviction that any attempt must be vain to refer the skeleton of sponges to the mere crystallizing

[1] *Challenger Reports*, vol xxi. p. 499.

tendencies of lime or silica 'by way of origin or explanation.' He points out as fatal to any such explanation, that the spicules are never really crystalline at all in their molecular constitution. They are always, when silicious, composed of 'amorphous hydrated silica or opal,' as proved by the analysis of their effects on light. This in itself is fatal to the mere mechanical or crystalline theory. Then also, marked curvatures are common, at variance with the laws of defined crystalline axes. Professor Schulze, therefore, concludes that 'the formative forces are in no essential way different from those which are everywhere exhibited in the shaping of the living organism and its parts[1].'

But this is not all. Professor Schulze goes back to the principle of Cuvier—the principle of basing all explanation of organic structure upon the recognition, as a fact, of organic functions. Whatever a structure actually does, is to be considered as that which it was made for doing. And conversely, wherever we can see any natural or physical necessity for any particular arrangement of structure, there we are to look for the explanation why it is actually provided. This principle is the best science, because it is the best common sense, and because it is the only principle on which organic structures can be made intelligible at all. On this principle of explanation the physical forces are not neglected. On the contrary, the demands they make upon our recognition as a consequence of their universality, and of their inherent and imperative

[1] *Challenger Reports*, vol. xxi. p. 500.

authority, are demands conceded as lying at the very root of the explanation which is to be sought for. They are not regarded as enemies or opponents with whom some compromise must be made, but as tools, or implements, or instruments, by whose sure and trusty co-operation some great object can only be attained. Looking steadily at the facts in the light of this principle, Professor Schulze has no difficulty in showing that the exquisitely beautiful structure of the vitreous or glassy sponges can easily be explained. In them, just as in the higher animals, weight has to be supported. The living protoplasm of sponges consists of ponderable matter. But being soft, gelatinous, and almost fluid, the skeleton which supports it, and holds it together in some definite form, has need to be a skeleton permeating its substance with some intricate network of sustaining structure. Such is the physical or mechanical need—if a certain work is to be effectively performed; and such accordingly is the framework which is actually supplied. Professor Schulze shows that in a soft substance more or less divided into spherical units which lie and press one upon another, the surfaces of contact are deformed by the mutual pressure, and the whole mass, unless mechanically sustained, must be incapable of coherence in any erect or definite form. He shows further that for the purpose of meeting this need the intercalation of triaxial spiculae, at the proper intervals or interspaces, is precisely the structure which effects the object with the greatest economy of material. The diagram by which this is shown is as beautiful, in the

intellectual sense, as the resulting pattern or plan of these silicious sponges is beautiful to the eye of sense.

Nor is it less important to observe that Professor Schulze regards, and rightly regards, this principle of explanation as not only compatible, but as the only one which is at all consistent, with the idea of development as the method pursued in Nature in the building up of organic forms. Development is an abstract conception and an abstract word without any definite meaning, unless it be coupled with some idea as to that which is developed. There may be a development of chaos as well as a development of order—a development of destruction as well as a development of construction. If function be that which is, above all other things, the object of development in organic forms, then the principle of explanation, which makes serviceability, or adaptation to actual use, the key to the explanation of them, must be the highest attainable to our intelligence. Professor Schulze puts this principle as a general proposition, thus: 'If one can distinctly demonstrate a natural and necessary connexion between the form and disposition of a skeletal element and the function which it discharges, one has, from the standpoint of utility and natural selection, rationalized the appearance of that form and disposition[1].' Acting on this principle and applying it to the analysis of the visible facts of skeletal structure in these wonderful organisms, he says, 'I am decidedly of opinion that it can be shown with convincing

[1] *Challenger Reports*, vol. xxi. p. 500.

probability that such a necessary relation does exist between the structure of the soft parts in each of the three principal groups of sponges, and the characteristical forms of spiculae, which we regard, on anatomical and developmental grounds, as primitive and fundamental in each group.' The whole of this language is teleological in the highest degree, and it specially involves the idea of development in time, from simpler to more and more complex structures, so that prevision and adaptability to needs which have not as yet arisen, are provided for, in the primitive or typical forms, by means of elements developing along predetermined lines. Professor Schulze traces the progress of their adaptation and development through different families and species, until we reach the exquisitely beautiful and complex structures of the Euplectella ; and he explains the relation between such a highly developed form and the earlier spicule by saying, 'It thus appears to me evident that in these circumstances no more advantageous form of spicule for the support of such simple, loose body, could be devised than the regular hexacts disposed in such a way that one radial ray unites the bounding lamellae[1].' And so at last a latticed network is produced, affording all the needed facilities for mechanical support, together with an ample provision for the innumerable orifices through which the currents of water may be sucked in, and brought into contact with the living and digesting 'sarcode.'

[1] *Challenger Reports*, vol. xxi. p. 504.

Chapter III.

INTUITIVE THEOLOGY.

RECOGNITIONS IN DESCRIPTIVE SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY.

It is most instructive to observe that the immediate perception and recognition of mental work in Nature, is often most remarkable in the language of those in whom it is more or less unconscious, or is, at least, wholly unconnected with any theological preconceptions. Writers of this class are perpetually using forms of expression, as well as individual words, all of which are literally charged with teleological meaning. Men, even, who would rather avoid such language if they could, but who are intent on giving the most complete and expressive description they can of the natural facts before them, find it wholly impossible to discharge this duty by any other means. Let us take as an example the work of describing organic structures in the science of Biology. The standard treatise of Huxley on the *Elements of Comparative Anatomy* affords a remarkable example of this necessity, and of its results. The constant use and repetition of teleological words, phrases, and grammatical constructions, all of which

express and embody the idea of mental preparation and design, is conspicuous throughout that most interesting volume. On the very first page he starts by calling all animal organs by the name of 'physiological apparatuses.' This word, apparatus, has, and can have, only one meaning—that, namely, which corresponds with its etymology. It is an example of those many invaluable words which are stamped with the die of some one simple and universal thought—a thought familiar to all men since first they made a fish-hook, an arrow, or a spear. *Ad-paratus* means any thing made 'for' the doing of something else—'for' the accomplishment of some end which has been thought of, and foreseen. When it is coupled, as in Huxley's use of it in this case, with such a word as 'physiological,' it has an immense and indeed an immeasurable sweep and meaning, because the functions discharged in physiology, range from the lowest to the highest rank; from motions which seem to be almost purely mechanical, to movements of thought and genius which we cannot even conceive of as being connected with matter in any form. When, therefore, all animal organisms are designated as 'physiological apparatuses,' we do not need to ask any question as to the intention of the writer who uses this language, as we analyze its meaning. That meaning is indisputable, whatever may have been his intention; and its significance is all the greater in proportion as it is separable from any conscious deliberate purpose. It stands forth as expressing a fact of mental perception and recog-

nition, more surely representing a truth than the photographic record of a heavenly body—otherwise unseen—upon a surface sensitive to light.

But there is no reason to suppose that Huxley uses this language without a full consciousness of its meaning, since it is observable that he varies it with synonyms, which are, if possible, even more direct. Thus, throughout the whole volume of his *Elements*, he perpetually and systematically uses the word 'plan' as the best word he can employ, and indeed the only word he can find, to designate the arrangements of organic structures. But 'plan' is a word which has no other meaning whatever than as designating that peculiar mental operation of which 'apparatuses' are the fruit. The whole volume is specially devoted to the consideration of animals as 'fabrics,' each of which is built upon a certain 'plan[1].' It is impossible to claim the right and the advantage of using such a word for purposes of description, and yet to disclaim its special and characteristic meaning in the reasonings of philosophy. A plan means only one thing—namely, an arrangement of matter, or of conduct, which has been preconceived with a view to some definite aim or purpose. It is a word which has no meaning at all except as applied to this well-known class of mental operations. No man in his senses would apply it to any arrangement, either of matter or of conduct, which is purely fortuitous, or determined alone by physical forces operating under no guidance or control.

[1] *Elements*, p. 2.

It is a curious circumstance, but it is nevertheless unquestionably true, that the disposition to relegate this purely mental character of physical and physiological 'apparatuses' to the category of theological ideas, and to dismiss it consequently from the category of scientific facts, is—at least in some minds—a disposition which is itself entirely due to a purely theological preconception. That preconception is that the very idea of design is essentially what is called 'anthropomorphic,' and therefore cannot properly be applied to the Divine mind, in which, it is further preconceived, that the element of time can have no place, and which, besides, cannot be supposed to be under any necessity of attaining its ends by what we know as contrivance. Whatever may be the value of these two assumptions as to what may be, or may not be, consistent with the nature of the Divine mind, or worthy of it, it is at least certain that such preconceptions belong to the region of theology and not to the region of what is called science. Nay more, it is clear that such assumptions, in so far as they are used to suppress, or to evade, obvious facts, are chargeable with that very error which is commonly, and no doubt sometimes justly, charged against theologians—namely, the error of refusing to recognize certain ascertained physical truths, merely because they are supposed to contradict theological doctrines. It is wholly irrational to doubt or explain away the natural facts which indicate all animal frames to be, what Huxley calls them, 'apparatuses' and 'plans,' because by doing so we may be alleged to

involve ourselves in conceptions about the nature of the Divine mind, which we choose to assume to be unworthy of it. What we have to deal with in science are facts, and, as such, with all the mental aspects and relations of phenomena to each other, and to ourselves, which may be accessible to us. When any of these relations are distinct and clear—more especially when any of them are so distinct and clear that we cannot even describe what we see, otherwise than in words which are full of the recognition of mind and of its work—then the rejection of them, on theological assumptions, is the widest possible departure from that love of truth, at whatever cost, which is the very essence of the scientific spirit.

How unreasonable it is to set aside, or to explain away, the full meaning of such words as 'apparatuses' and 'plans,' comes out strongly when we analyze the preconceived assumptions which are supposed to be incompatible with the admission of it. The notion, for example, that time represents a purely human idea, and can have no place in Nature except as a mere condition, or a mere infirmity of human thought—this notion is, in the strictest sense of the word, nonsense. Whatever else time may be, it is at least confessedly a necessity of human thought, and, if it be so, it is plain that we cannot have any conception of anything whatever into which time does not enter. Consequently no reasoning can be founded on the assumption that time is a delusion. If it be indeed a necessity of our thought, the presumption is that, in some way or another, it does

represent some reality, even though that representation should be an approximation only. But, even apart from this presumption, it is obvious that at least any opposite presumption is unwarrantable; and the deliberate setting aside of the evidence which proves that organic structures are apparatuses for the accomplishment of certain ends, because this evidence involves the conception of time, is therefore wholly irrational.

There must be some very specious plausibility about the notion that our conception of time is a mere delusion attaching to our humanity—since it has found expression in many forms, and it has been used for many purposes—not being at all confined, or even specially connected with, those who seek to avoid and evade the evidence of mental purpose in the works of Nature. And yet it ought to stagger all who have any regard for the interests of truth as a thing which even in any degree is accessible to us. If any conception, which is to us a true necessity of thought—a condition absolutely inseparable from the working of every faculty of observation or of reasoning which we possess—is to be looked upon as probably, or even possibly, a mere incident of our human weakness and limitations, then, obviously, an element of paralysis is introduced into all our mental operations, which is destructive of our confidence in any one of them. It is an idea which lands us, and leaves us, in a state of universal and hopeless scepticism. Every conviction we have, or can have, rests upon our confidence in those primary

truths which hold the rank of absolute necessities of thought. If they fail us, if they are conceivably mere delusions, mere 'forms,' as they are sometimes vaguely called, then the whole structure of human knowledge crumbles into dust. There can be no such thing as science. The idea of causation must be banished along with the idea of time. They cannot be divided. Again, the idea of right and wrong, as inseparable from the very conception of conduct and of its consequences, must be equally abandoned. Logical necessities, and moral obligations, fall together in one universal ruin. The idea of development, now so popular among scientific men, is of course condemned as specially dependent on a true reality in the element of time. In short, if it be indeed true that our idea of time is nothing but an infirmity of the fleshly mind, then neither knowledge nor virtue can be attained by man.

When consequences so grave are involved in the indulgence of vague surmises, such as those often expressed in reference to time, they ought to be submitted to rigorous examination. This particular surmise is, indeed, almost incapable of expression in language which is rational or coherent. But the element of plausibility which must belong to it can be traced clearly enough to that one great source of fallacies which is so fruitful, namely, the ambiguities of language. What happens to us is this: in the first place, we use the word 'time' not for the mere idea of duration, but for all the many agencies which work in time; in the second place, we associate with the abstract idea of time the limitations which in time

are set upon our own life, and upon our own processes and opportunities of acquiring knowledge. Thus the abounding elements of metaphor in the language of poetry, of religion, and of common life—the elements of mere omission, that is to say—of things left out but quite implied and understood—all these have combined to confuse our thoughts and to vitiate our philosophy. We speak of time as if it were an active agent in doing this, that, and the other. Yet we are quite conscious, when we choose to think of it, that when we speak of time in this sense, we are really thinking and speaking, not of time in itself, but of the various physical forces which operate slowly and continuously in, or during, time. Apart from these forces, time does nothing. And when any of these physical causes are suspended or impeded in their operation, then the effects, loosely attributed to the mere idea of duration, are often altogether suspended. There was lately found in an Egyptian tomb, and acquired by the British Museum, a little deposit of articles used for a woman's toilet. Amongst other items there was a small pot of some ointment. The whole was enclosed in a wooden box, divided internally into small compartments adapted to the size and shape of the various contents. All who saw it were instinctively led to conclude, that whilst the articles themselves were very ancient, the wooden box must have been made recently for the safer carriage of the contents. But it was not so. The box looked as fresh, and the wood was as sound and resonant to touch, as if it had been made yesterday in any

carpenter's shop. Yet the whole deposit was assigned, by the date of the tomb, to the middle of the sixteenth century B.C. In other words, the box was not less than about 3,400 years old, and that long period of time had produced no decay whatever, whilst probably a tenth part of the same time would be sufficient, in our climate, to make the box crumble into dust. When we speak thus, we mean, not that the mere time has done anything, but that the aqueous vapour in our atmosphere would have rotted the wood if it had had a continuous operation of 300 years. It is the economics of speech which lead us to forget these truths. For shortness, we speak of time as including and expressing the physical agencies which work in time. But this is not due to any real infirmity in our mental capacities. When we choose to exercise the necessary reflection, the distinction is quite apparent, and the idea of time ceases to be identified in our minds with an agency of change.

Still more deceptive is the careless identification we are apt to make between time, and that tract or division of time which we call the future. The consciousness of our ignorance of this tract, weighs upon us. It colours all our thoughts. The truth that we know not what a day may bring forth, is quite sufficient to make us confound the idea of time with some agency which of necessity limits knowledge, and cannot even conceivably coexist with omniscience. But this again is a pure delusion, which dissolves in thin air the moment we look at it steadily. The idea of time has no necessary connexion whatever with the idea of

a limited faculty of foreseeing. On the contrary, even our own small experience of foreseeing indicates clearly that knowledge confers the power of foreseeing in direct proportion to its completeness. It is not only conceivable that to absolute knowledge the future might be far more absolutely known than either the present or the past can be known to us, but it is even inconceivable that any other result could arise from omniscience. It is evident, therefore, that there is no antecedent presumption whatever against the truthfulness of those interpretations of Nature which regard animal organs as preparations in point of time, and apparatuses in point of purpose, for the accomplishment of definite ends, or, in other words, for the discharge of certain functions.

It is quite true that there are some conceptions of which we cannot get rid—which mingle with much that we think, and with all we do—but which, nevertheless, are connected with nothing but transitory conditions, and are conceptions, therefore, which we must regard as representing no absolute existence. Thus, for example, in our relations with space, we cannot shake off the conception of high and low, of upwardness and downwardness, of elevation and depression—a conception which meets us everywhere, and finds expression in innumerable metaphors, applicable to our very highest thoughts of virtue and of wisdom. Yet nothing can be more certain than that the whole of these conceptions are founded on facts and distinctions which are purely local, passing, and in a sense accidental. Downwards and upwards are words which

have no meaning at all in absolute and empty space. That which is downwards to us in England, is upwards to our colonists in the Antipodes. Downwardness means simply the direction in which gravitation exerts the strongest pull. The approach of another body to our earth, might reverse that direction in a moment. Our conception, therefore, of downwardness, although no delusion, is a conception which corresponds only to a contingent fact—to relations which are purely local and conditional. But the very power we have of seeing this, is a proof of the great distinction between such a conception in respect to space, and the very different conceptions which are our own in respect to time. Neither the abstract idea of space nor the abstract idea of time, can possibly be explained away as we can explain away some particular relations in which we stand to both, as a consequence of particular conditions. Our very idea of motion implies space, and our very idea of life, and thought, and action, implies motion. And so it is with time. Things thought of, and things done, must all be thought of and done as in succession; and when we use such poetical phrases as 'when time shall be no more,' we can only mean when some existing conditions shall cease to be, and when other conditions shall take their place.

There is, therefore, not the slightest justification for the vague surmise that our conception of time is a delusion, and that our nature is deceiving us when it imposes that conception upon us as an absolute necessity of thought, any more than that it is

deceiving us in any of the other postulates of reason or of conscience. All fears, consequently, and all suspicions which may inspire us with scepticism as to any aspects of Nature, however obvious, and however immediately recognized, because those aspects involve the idea of time, must at once be set aside as morbid and irrational. Such aspects of Nature are indelibly recorded in the instinctive use of the words 'plan' and 'apparatus' by men like Huxley, whose one duty and aim is to describe, as fully and as accurately as they can, the phenomena which they actually see. For the important point to be noted about this language is, that it is used, not at all as expressing an argument or an inference, but as describing a fact, just as much as form, or colour, or weight, or any other natural relation can be predicated as a fact in describing any natural object. The relation between any apparatus and the work it is fitted to perform, is quite as much a fact—quite as much an object of immediate perception—as any relation which it can bear to light, or to space, or to gravitation.

Nor is it less worthy of observation that, through the special science of embryology, the element of time contributes largely to any confirmatory evidence which may be at all needed for the full justification of such teleological words and forms of speech, as those which comparative anatomists are compelled to use. In completed organs we see an accomplished end, and a preparation finished for its purpose. But in the growth of embryo organs, we see them in the

course of preparation—during processes of development which are dissociated from all actual use, and are yet inseparably united with uses which are yet to be. We can see those organs in the course of being moulded through changes which may be often watched from day to day, and in which a continuous relation to the future is not only observable, but is the most characteristic and most obvious feature. The consequence is that, even when the use of such words as 'plan' and 'apparatus' is evaded, the whole language of embryological descriptive science is constructed on the principle of describing purpose. For example, the use of the prepositions 'to' and 'for'—meaning 'in order to' and 'for the purpose of'—is perpetual among biological writers in describing the destination of incipient organic structures. Just as in shipbuilding we describe the initial laying down of a long bar of iron 'to' form the keel, so in the building of a vertebrate organism, we have to describe the laying down of a primitive or initial furrow 'to' be the bed and mould of the spinal column. Hence embryology is a science possessing the highest value, as revealing facts which are apt to be forgotten. There are some illusions of the mind very similar to those which are known as spectral illusions of the bodily eye, and some of those illusions become impossible in the clear light of embryology. When we see physiological apparatuses in full work and operation, the nature of the connexion between the work done and the implement that does it, is a connexion which is liable to be

forgotten or misconceived. The perfect ease with which the work is done—the complete unity which, when seen together, they seem to constitute—is very apt to suggest a connexion of purely physical cause and effect, as if the thing to be done was the producing cause of the apparatus by which it is accomplished. That, for example, the waters somehow give rise to the fins that swim in them, or that the air somehow gives rise to the wings that cleave it, may be a natural suggestion, securing the passive acquiescence of careless or languid thought. For, indeed, in one sense it is a true suggestion, inasmuch as the laws of aqueous and of aerial resistance, do constitute the need for those physiological apparatuses being produced. But the bond of connexion between these laws and the actual supply of the implements which they need, is a bond that demands an intermediate agency which is cognizant of the need, upon the one hand, and of the means, upon the other hand, by which alone that need can be supplied. There is a physical vacancy or gap between the need and the supply, which the automatic action of the physical forces cannot fill up. This is the vacancy or gap which becomes visible, even to the bodily eye, when an implement or apparatus is seen by itself, not only divorced from function, but in a yet imperfect state—in the state of being slowly prepared for work which lies before it, perhaps, in a yet distant future. And such is the power and subtlety of language, that the whole difference between these widely separate ideas as to the nature of the bond uniting a physio-

logical apparatus and its function, is a difference fully measured and expressed in the two separate prepositions, 'for' and 'by.' An apparatus is always made *for* doing a certain work. It is not made *by* doing it. This is plain enough in logic; but it is only when we can follow the steps of its embryological development in time, that this wide difference is brought home to us as a visible and objective fact; and, accordingly, it is when describing that fact in its various aspects that the comparative anatomist is compelled to recognize it in the use of the purest teleological language, even if this employment be only in the constant employment of the teleological prepositions 'to' and 'for.'

This feature of purely teleological language is specially remarkable in Huxley's book on the *Elements of Comparative Anatomy*, when it becomes his duty to describe the embryonic development of the great class of the Vertebrata. The element of time, and the dominance of that tract or aspect of time which we call the future, is the most prominent characteristic in the visible phenomena. Let us take, for example, a single passage, in which the author describes the laying down of the vertebral column in the development of a hen's egg: 'A well-defined though shallow straight groove, the primitive groove, bounded at the sides by a slight elevation of the blastoderm, indicating the position of the *future longitudinal axis* of *the body* of the chick. Soon, the lateral boundaries of this groove, in what *will become* the anterior region of the body, *grow up* into

plates, the dorsal laminae, at length uniting, enclose *the future* cerebro-spinal cavity, the blastoderm, beyond the region at which the dorsal laminae are developed, grows downward *to* form the ventral laminae, and where the margins of these pass into the general blastoderm, the outer serous or epidermic layer rises up into a fold which encircles the whole embryo ; and the anterior and posterior parts of this fold, growing more rapidly than the lateral portions, form a kind of hood *for* the cephalic and caudal ends of the body respectively[1].' No language could be more telling than this for the purpose of expressing the visible subordination of each step in an organic growth to the building up of a preconceived and predestined structure. It is repeated in the same work, with much emphasis, when the author comes to deal with one of the most important of all organic structures, the skull—that which is made for holding and protecting the brain. He speaks of the 'plan discoverable in the noble construction,' and of the 'plan,' as separable from the 'connexions and arrangements of the bony elements,' by which the 'complex whole' is visibly built up by processes which are marked off by a definite order in time. For the purpose of illustrating this, he returns to the example of the embryo chick, and resumes his description of that march of events which he finds it impossible to explain without a constant reference to results lying in the future:—'A peculiar cellular cylinder, tapering off at each end, the notochord, is

[1] *Elements*, pp. 65, 66.

soon discovered, occupying the bottom of the groove,' previously described; and then follows a striking enumeration of the steps by which this future termination in a skull is brought about: 'A laminar outgrowth of the convex summits of the ridges, which bound the primitive groove, now takes place in that part of the embryo which will eventually become the middle region of the head; and the dorsal laminae, thus produced, extending forwards and backwards, like parapets, upon each side of the primitive groove, *lay the foundations* of the lateral walls, not only of the skull, but of the spinal column[1].' Again, from certain rudimentary bones certain 'cartilaginous' plates are developed which *foreshadow* the forms and relations of some parts of the completed structure[2].

But perhaps the most striking evidence of the impossibility of eliminating from our minds the impression made upon them of some other related mind being at work in Nature, is afforded by the elaborate attempt of Mr. Herbert Spencer to effect this elimination in his *Principles of Biology*. He describes his own aim to be 'the interpretation of all phenomena in terms of matter, motion, and force.' And this is his avowed object in framing his definition of organic life, whether in its lowest, or in its very highest manifestations.

These words, 'in terms of matter, force, and motion,' would seem to bear only one interpretation, and to indicate a purely physical explanation of

[1] *Elements*, pp. 136, 137. [2] *Ibid.* p. 142.

everything, as the highest and most adequate representation of all we can see and know. But Mr. Spencer adds to these words two explanatory declarations, in order to mitigate their obvious meaning: the first is that, in making this attempt to reduce everything to matter, force, and motion, he has no other aim than that of 'reducing our complex symbols of thought to the simplest symbols.' The second declaration is that his words are not intended to have any bearing on 'the ultimate nature of things,' in the way of being either materialistic or spiritualistic, since he holds his symbols to be equally compatible with both these opposite philosophies. But neither of these two explanatory declarations can be accepted as consistent with the process he adopts. The first of them can be shown to be a declaration which he does not fulfil; and the second of them can be shown to be irrelevant and illogical. As regards the first, it is not true, as a fact, that matter, motion, and force are more 'simple' words, or symbols of thought, than purpose, intention, or design. On the contrary, the abstract words matter, force, and motion, are infinitely more complex, and more inconceivable to us, than the mental phenomena of plans, purposes, and designs. This can be tested at once by observing the extreme difficulty with which the abstract properties of matter and its forces, such as inertia, energy, gravitation, &c., can be fully explained, or can be conceived, or grasped, even by educated men, and, still more, by the ignorant and the illiterate; whilst, on the other hand, there is no child or savage in the world who

has any difficulty in conceiving of the mental powers by which he forms and executes his designs. As to the declaration that matter, force, and motion, may be conceived of as in their ultimate nature, as phenomena of mind, all that need be said is, that this is a mere assertion not only unproved, but condemned by the evidence of consciousness. To us there is no bridge across the gulf which seems to separate mind from matter; and a vague surmise, or even an abstract conviction of the probability that there must be some such bridge between them, does not amount to a spiritualistic view of things, and does not prove any compatibility between such a view and the assumed possibility of reducing all phenomena into the terms of matter, motion, and force.

But the special point on which I have to dwell here, is the striking fact that Mr. Spencer does not succeed in his endeavour to reduce the phenomena of life to terms of matter, force, and motion, or to eliminate from his own language the symbols of thought which he desires to set aside as too complex. He makes a strenuous endeavour indeed to do so, but he fails completely, and is driven, in spite of himself, to fall back upon words, phrases, and grammatical constructions, which entirely depend for all their force and significance, on the teleological conceptions which he is seeking to avoid. After four chapters and some seventy pages of subtle and laborious endeavour to expunge from the definition of organic life every element which is not as purely mechanical as Cuvier's first notion of a vortex, Mr. Spencer at last sums up

his definition thus: 'Life is the definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive.' But having got this far, the definition is no sooner enunciated, than he confesses that it is 'essentially defective'; that it not only fails in 'giving a complete idea of the thing contemplated,' but that it 'fails from omitting the most distinctive peculiarity' of life as known to us[1]. Accordingly he proceeds, in his fifth chapter, to supplement the definition by explaining what this distinctive peculiarity is. It is in this explanation that he breaks down by falling back, at last, upon the ordinary 'symbols of thought'; that is to say, upon the ordinary words which embody the instinctive perceptions of his mind. He is quite honest in avowing that he seeks to 'avoid any teleological implication'; and therefore he begins by giving to the active functions of living organs the name of 'responses' to stimulus. But then he admits that in all organic reactions, not only is there some response, but always that one particular kind of response which is characterized by 'fitness.' Here we have the first step taken in the rapid retreat which follows. Fitness is a word expressing a certain definite kind of relation between two, or more, things; and this relation, as a perceived fact, constitutes the whole meaning of the word. Therefore we must ask, 'Fitness for what?' The answer is, fitness for some work lying in the future, fitness for producing some changes which have 'manifest relations' 'to future external events.' He confesses that in the inorganic

[1] *Principles of Biology*, ch. iv. pp. 70, 71.

world, by contrast with the organic, any changes or reactions which take place owing to physical causes, 'have no apparent relations to future external events.' In vital changes he admits that, on the contrary, 'such relations are manifest.' Therefore Mr. Spencer is obliged to drop the vague abstract word 'responses,' which he had adopted only to avoid 'teleological implications,' and to adopt other forms of grammatical construction. But in these other forms the teleological implication comes on us with a rush. He tries all he can to wash out as much of this implication as possible, by resorting again to vague generalities in defining, or describing, the kind of adaptation which applies to the case. He calls it 'an adaptation of living changes to changes in surrounding circumstances[1].' But, conscious, once more, of the inadequacy and incompetence of these vague generalities to express the facts of organic adaptations, he goes on with an elaborate endeavour to supply the missing elements by using such forms of speech as may still keep at arm's length the teleological implications which he is so anxious to avoid. Thus, he says that in using the word 'adaptation' he means to indicate that 'the constant actions occurring within an organism imply some constant actions occurring without it.' Here the abstract word 'changes' is used in order to avoid using any definite word more adequate to express that particular kind of 'change,' which he calls an organic function; whilst, further, the abstract word 'imply' is used in order to avoid expressing that

[1] *Principles of Biology*, ch. v. p. 73.

particular kind of 'implication' which is visibly and exclusively teleological. Yet all these precautions are vain. Mr. Spencer is compelled to introduce the word 'processes' as explanatory of the vaguer word 'changes,' and he is also compelled to use the words 'special relations' as supplementary of the connexion between the changes which are without, and the changes which are within. Even with these supplements it is no advance, but a relapse, for the thinker, who has got so far as to use the words fitness and adaptation, to fall back into the comparatively meaningless words which need all these circumlocutory additions to make them intelligible at all. But Mr. Spencer is so pleased with the careful devices by which teleological implications can thus, for a moment, be kept out of sight, that he goes on to identify our conception of life with this formula of words: 'The definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive, in correspondence with external coexistences and sequences.'

It would be difficult to invent any formula of words which illustrates so well the abuse, as distinguished from the use, of language. If the great gift of speech be indeed given to us for the expression of thought, it cannot be well used when it is employed, with conscious ingenuity, for the concealment and suppression of it. Still more violent is that abuse when language is carefully selected so as to obliterate, or omit, those direct perceptions of the mind, which it is the special function of our words to recognize and record. The highly artificial character of this formula must be

obvious at a glance. It requires a sustained effort to comprehend even its narrow meaning. But on examination, it becomes at once apparent that it is applicable to innumerable inorganic processes, as well as to those which are the work of life, and therefore that it fails to specify those characteristics, the selection of which is the sole duty of a true definition to bring out into their due prominence. The processes through which an organized body goes to dissolution and decay, are equally a 'definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive, in correspondence with external co-existences and sequences.' The falling to pieces of one set of chemical combinations consists essentially in recombinations, which are both simultaneous and successive, so that the formula is utterly useless as any definition at all. And the sterility of the formula is thus seen to be due to concealments which are intentional—that is to say, to the deliberate omission of some direct perceptions of the mind, which are impressed upon our intellectual retina, when we contemplate the peculiar phenomena of life.

It is a striking evidence of the force and indelibility of these impressions, that Mr. Herbert Spencer awakes to their presence and to their power the moment he has got his wooden formula completed, and he begins to see and to feel its shortcomings. In particular he feels that the vague 'correspondence' needs to have 'its full significance' explained, by going on to trace out, and to enlarge upon, the particular kind of correspondence which connects

life, as distinguished from other things, with external coexistences and sequences. It is in his endeavour to do this that we find the truth gaining its appropriate triumph over him. Just as we found Cuvier, in his explanation of Life, advancing from the rude mechanical image of a vortex, to the most purely teleological conceptions of the reasons why organic structures must be such as they are in order to effect certain necessary ends, and to discharge certain necessary functions, so do we find Mr. Herbert Spencer falling almost unconsciously into the same line of argument as the only possible explanation of organic structures. The reason why, not the mechanical cause how—things are done, and apparatuses are supplied, this is the root-idea of his language through many successive pages. 'That a protozoon may continue to exist, the assimilation (of external matter) must keep pace with, or exceed, the oxidation.' 'That a creature of this order may continue to live it is necessary,' &c., &c., and then follow two specific necessities demanded for the same purpose—some external form of matter capable of digestion, and some decomposing fluid capable of effecting solution and reintegration in a new form. This idea of explanation is repeated over and over again. 'Unless' some specific thing is done, the polype would die. And then, just like Cuvier, he goes on to explain why it is that a 'circulating system' is a necessity for certain purposes, which purposes must be attained if some further consequences are to be avoided. This line of explanation is pursued from the lowest to the

highest form of organic life, including the highest intelligence of man. Then, in trying to keep up the necessary distinction between the organic and the inorganic world, Mr. Spencer is led again to dwell on that all-important element of futurity, which organic adaptations always involve. In the inorganic world, he explains, 'a change produces a change and there it ends.' But it is not so, he points out, in the world of life. There the primary change in the organism always 'anticipates' some other secondary change in external things; and this anticipation is always in the nature of an adjustment. This idea of 'anticipation,' not as an effect, which follows mechanically on a cause, but as a structure so pre-arranged as to meet some needed fitness and harmony with outward things,—this is teleology in its purest form.

As Mr. Spencer advances in his illustrations, and in spite of a constant endeavour to be as mechanical as he can, his language becomes more and more deeply coloured by this intuitive preconception. He speaks of the 'process of evolution' as one during which the organs of the embryo are fitted to their prospective functions, and he is, like every one else, obliged to have recourse to the word 'adjustments' [1] as the best word to describe those continuous changes which are effected in its growth. But it is not even in this necessary recourse to the old familiar words which the usage of mankind has consecrated to the expression of purpose, that the teleological idea comes out most strongly. It is strongest in many passages

[1] *Principles of Biology*, p. 81.

where such words as adaptation or adjustment are carefully avoided; but where, nevertheless, the whole explanation of organic structures is founded on some argument to show the Why, and not the How. 'In order that' the creature may be enabled to live, some obvious requirement 'must' be met. 'In order that' food should be digested, some solvent fluid 'must' be provided. 'In order that' the blood should circulate, some ramifying vessels 'must' be laid down. 'In order' that blood should be oxygenated, some apparatus 'must' be prepared in which the blood may be exposed to the air in some network of pervious ducts. Statements such as these are, indeed, conclusive arguments. But, quite obviously, they are arguments addressed to our own reasoning intelligence as explaining the operations of another intelligence having some close relation with itself. It is an argument which assumes the existence and the recognition of a mental motive. This is the most familiar and the most complete of all possible explanations of a certain class of occurrences. Such an argument could not be applied to the explanation of any purely physical phenomena—that is to say, of any phenomena which are wholly unconnected with any idea of arrangements for a purpose. For example, the use of water in pipes for the supply of a house, and the bursting of these same pipes from exposure to frost, or from excessive pressure, are both physical phenomena, due to physical causes. But we could not rationally say that the frost or the excessive pressure were needed to make them burst; whereas we must say, if we

intend to explain the distribution of water in the house, that pipes were needed for that purpose. Accordingly, when we find any writer compelled to resort to this form of language in explaining organic structures, we detect in it, whether he is conscious of it or not, the instinctive perception and acknowledgement of a mental purpose, as the presence, and the power, which alone explains the structure he describes.

For example, Mr. Spencer gives us an explanation of the very complicated structure through which the heart's action is sustained in the higher animals. And in this explanation we have a typical illustration of the grammatical construction which expresses that kind of relation which exists between a mental purpose and an apparatus specially constructed to attain it. It is as follows: 'that the heart may act it must, from instant to instant, be excited by discharges from certain ganglia; and the discharges from these ganglia are made possible only by the conveyance to them, from instant to instant, of the blood which the heart propels [1].' The evidence, which language such as this affords, is all the more striking because it is involuntary, and, indeed, because it is rendered not only without the will, but against it. For it is to be noted that this evidence comes from language the very object of which is not to describe to us facts as they occur in Nature, but to define them in an artificial abstract, which is not only a conscious, but is even a laboured exercise of intellectual ingenuity, framed with the express purpose of eliminating, as far as

[1] *Principles of Biology*, p. 163.

possible, that element of purpose which, in spite of every care, is thus found insinuating itself into the very structure of the sentences employed.

The failure is as signal as it is deserved; because, in philosophy, it is not a legitimate aim, in framing abstract conceptions, to make abstracts which are intentionally defective. The formation of abstract ideas is the most glorious power possessed by the human intellect; but it is a power, like every other, which must be exercised under laws of absolute fidelity to the actual phenomena which are thus abstracted and interpreted. An abstract conception, to be true, must be a faithful abstract of that which is called the concrete, a representation in the light of mind of the essential characteristics of the natural facts. Just as in framing an abstract or epitome of any human document, it would be illegitimate and deceptive, if we were to do so on the principle of omitting some element of meaning, which we do not like and do not choose to recognize; so, in forming our abstract conceptions of natural phenomena, we can do nothing but deceive ourselves and others, if we proceed upon any similar principle. It is fortunate that the tell-tale character of language interposes an insuperable obstacle in the way of such attempts. Language is full of abstract conceptions, but in that medium they are automatically formed, and not artificially concocted, and therefore they retain the true impress of the indelible impressions which Nature makes upon the receptive and unconscious mind. Hence it is that when men set themselves to the task of wiping out any of these old and

ingrained impressions, they find no implement ready to their hand. They have to use the only tools and weapons which exist for the work of human thought, and these tools and weapons have been fashioned and moulded upon perceptions which make their presence felt in spite of every effort to keep it out. If, indeed, we think that we have discovered some wholly new idea, for which human language has no adequate expression, it would become our duty to go back constantly to the actual facts of Nature, or to what philosophers call the concrete, and to question it more closely, in order to see whether the known forms of human speech are indeed deceptive, whether they insert into our conceptions of phenomena any ideas which are not really true, but are the product only of some delusion of our own. This may be a legitimate operation : it is an operation which generally not only confirms the truthfulness of language, but very often supplies new and striking testimony to its inherent and penetrating power. To go back to Nature, and to look steadily into her face, is always a good and a fruitful thing to do—to compare our abstracts with her facts, her workings with our conceptions of them. Accordingly it is a memorable and striking fact that Mr. Herbert Spencer, in defining that which is called 'function' in organic structures, makes the broad and unhesitating admission that when we go to the concrete facts of Nature, and leave the region of artificial and concocted abstracts, we find ourselves face to face with the facts of special adaptation, and with the absolute necessity of employing its characteristic

forms of speech. 'Physiology,' he says, 'in its concrete interpretations, recognizes special functions as the ends of special organs; regards the teeth as having the office of mastication; the heart as an apparatus to propel blood; this gland as fitted to produce one requisite secretion, and that to produce another; each muscle as the agent of a particular motion; each nerve as the vehicle of a special sensation, or a special motor impulse[1].'

Here at last we have the language of Nature, the language of common sense, because it is the language of direct and immediate perception. But it is at the same time the language of the most pronounced teleology. The whole sentence is saturated with, and vitalized by, the idea of mental purpose as the ultimate agency concerned in organic function. Both in the use of individual words which have no other meaning, and in the grammatical constructions which imply it, this idea stands confessed. Special functions are the 'ends' of special organizations. And this is spoken of not as the result of an inference, but as the 'recognition' of a fact. The doing of their work is described as the performance of an assigned 'office.' The heart is an apparatus 'to' propel. Each gland is described as 'fitted' to produce some secretion which is 'requisite' for doing something in particular, and so on. And all this language, in all its individual words, and in all its grammatical structure, so full of rich and various implications of mind and purpose, is, we are expressly told, the language which the physiologist

[1] *Principles of Biology*, pp. 155, 156.

must use when he looks at the facts 'in the concrete'; that is to say, when he looks at them as they actually occur in Nature, and not as represented in some expurgated edition of them made by ingenious manipulation. We cannot, indeed, value too highly the abstracting faculty in our minds. But we must not mistake for its genuine work something which is in truth a counterfeit. It is that faculty, acting automatically according to its own inherent laws, that has developed such words as 'function,' and 'office,' and 'recognize,' and 'ends' used in the sense of aims, and 'apparatus,' and 'fitted to,' and 'agent,' and innumerable others, all of which represent abstract ideas, but with this important difference, that whereas the speech-making faculty in man makes abstracts which are full, real, and true, the self-conscious philosopher is very apt to make abstracts which are empty, artificial, and deceptive.

It would be easy to fill a volume with passages from scientific descriptions of organic structures which are charged with the same principle of interpretation, as one which cannot be evaded or avoided, because the connexion which it sees between preparations in the past, or in the present, for uses which lie in the future, is not a connexion which is any matter of mere inference however sure, but is a connexion which is directly visible as an objective fact. One of the most striking and instructive passages that I have seen in any writer is to be found in a recent declaration made by Huxley in respect to the animating spirit of his own biological work in the past, and to

the broadest results it has left upon his mind. It is well known that this distinguished man had for some years abandoned his special work of observation and discovery in the world of organic life, and had devoted himself to philosophical essays on a great variety of subjects. In the course of one of these he supplies us with the following invaluable bit of work in self-analysis: 'the only part of my professional course which really interested me was physiology, which is the mechanical engineering of living machines; and notwithstanding that natural science has been my proper business, I am afraid there is very little of the genuine naturalist in me. I never collected anything, and species-work was always a burden to me. What I cared for was the architectural and engineering part of the business—the working out the wonderful unity of plan in the thousands and thousands of diverse living constructions, and the modifications of similar apparatuses to serve diverse ends.' It is impossible to mistake this language. It positively labours under the instinctive need and desire to pile together words strong enough, and definite enough, to convey the most teleological conceptions of Nature, and to impress them on other minds as the only conceptions which are of any dignity or worth as representing facts.

There is, of course, no philosophical value whatever in such quotations as a mere means of convicting individual writers of some personal inconsistency. The sole value of them lies in that aspect of language which regards it as—what it is—as much a natural product as

any other organic growth, and which demands the rigid examination or analysis of its actual contents, as the very highest instrument of our research. And it is to be observed that the progress of modern physiological discovery, shows no tendency whatever to make the use of this language more rare, or to diminish the instinctive necessity under which men feel themselves obliged to have recourse to it, in describing what they find and see. It is quite the contrary. The new methods and instruments of examination, the higher microscopic powers, the inventions by which the finest animal tissues can be now preserved in hardened glycerine, and can be cut into thin sections revealing the minutest details of organic structures—all these have no other effect than to show how all-pervading is that relation which consists in the preparation of some fitting apparatus for the future discharge of some special function. Not even the most mechanical speculative theories, can shake off this perception or long maintain any forms of speech which are competent to exclude it. The idea of development in all its logical forms is not antagonistic to, but in perfect harmony with, the idea of purpose. Design from first to last, from its first conception to the attainment of its farthest aims, is, and so far as we know must be, a process of development. That development may be slow, or it may be quick and sudden in its steps. It may be effected in ways widely various, as by outward building, or by inward growth; but its one essential character remains unchanged. It is a peculiar relation of cause and effect operating in time, and

exhibiting this one essential characteristic—of having been directed in the past, and of being continuously directed in the present, to some end which is future, the direction being of that nature which we instinctively and accurately call an aim.

Chapter IV.

INTUITIVE THEOLOGY.

ITS LIMITATIONS.

It is, however, most important to observe that the intuitive recognition of the existence of aims, or of design, as a fact in Nature, does not stand at all on the same footing as many farther conclusions that have been, or may be, founded upon that fact. Design, and what is called 'the argument from design,' are two very different things. Such arguments may be good or they may be bad, in various degrees. But they all lie in the region of arguments and of inferences, and not in the region of pure and simple fact. This is a distinction which has not generally been observed, although it is quite clear, when it is pointed out, and is obviously one of cardinal importance. It is true that the existence of design, as a fact, must have its own consequences, for there is no observed fact in Nature which stands alone, unconnected with others which can be reached by inference. But it does not follow that our inferences are always sound, nor does it follow that even conclusions which are true can be proved from any one or two facts, however large and suggestive they may be, or however directly and certainly

perceived. It does not follow that because the kind of order, of arrangement, and of adjustment among physical forces, which prevails in Nature, is clearly that characteristic kind which belongs to mind, therefore we can solve any of the innumerable problems which arise as to the Being or Beings in whom that mind may reside. A purpose or intention may be the most certain and visible of all facts, while He who purposes, or intends, may be otherwise absolutely unknown. There may remain unknown to us, for example, all those ulterior aims and ends which we most desire to understand. Unknown to us may be the rank and place in the general system of things which is really occupied by all the carefully prepared contrivances and apparatuses we see around us. Unknown to us may be the extent of the contriving power, whether it is limited or unlimited. Unknown, above all, may the Contriver be in His relations to those moral qualities which are the highest in our own minds. All these questions, with a thousand others, constitute the immense region in which what are called the difficulties of natural religion arise. Nor can it be denied that those difficulties are profound. But they do not, in the least, affect the certainty of that one fundamental fact which we see so clearly, that we cannot escape from the recognition of it in the mere act of describing the commonest phenomena of Nature. The difficulties belong altogether to another category. They are not difficulties in the recognition of mental purposes, for, on the contrary, the only difficulty in this region is to avoid,

or to evade, the continual use of the appropriate language of that conception. The difficulties, real or supposed, are all in the region of the inferences and presumptions which arise out of that fact, and not in the region of the fact itself. Having faculties which not only enable us to see, but which compel us to the perpetual confession of, the obvious fact that innumerable structures and arrangements of Nature, have been prepared in time for the accomplishment of certain immediate purposes, we are most naturally led to feel as if the same faculties must be sufficient to lead us on and on, until much fuller, if not final, explanations are attained.

But it is in these onward steps that we find ourselves baffled at every turn. There is no room for any doubt as to the point where the difficulties begin. That point is fixed by the universal experience of mankind. No early race, so far as we know, and no early school of human thought, has ever had the slightest difficulty in seeing mind in the world around us. It never occurred to any of them to doubt it. The very idea of an 'argument from design' as either a supporting, or a defensive, argument on the subject, is the product of a later age. The development of human thought on this subject in history has been plain enough. On the one hand, all men everywhere, however rude, have felt and seen in themselves and around them, the agency and the power of mind and will; on the other hand, they have never seen anywhere anything to tell them where that mind resided, nor the person or persons, whether few or many, amongst

whom it was distributed ; nor the limits or conditions of its action, nor more than a very few of the immediate purposes of its work, nor, finally, its precise place and function in the general system of Nature. The fact of its universal presence was the only certainty. To fancy, therefore, and to the unrestrained exercise of the imagination, all else concerning it was absolutely left. This is the simple and the necessary origin of all mythologies. The fancies and imaginations of each people reflected, of course, their own condition of mental culture, and their own powers, however undeveloped, of observation and of reasoning. The result was inevitable. The mythologies of all races, with some common features inseparable from the very conception of the existence of minds other than their own, were a confused mass of childish, or of hideous superstitions: and in all cases of which the history is known, the evidence is clear that the path of development has lain in deepening degradation. Elements indeed of great poetic beauty, or of picturesqueness, appeared in the poetical mythology of the Greeks, and abundant traces of profound thought remained in all the great meditative religions of the East. But everywhere, whether among the rudest savages or the most civilized nations of the world, we see, on the one hand, the universal perception of mental or spiritual agencies in the world other than, and higher than, our own; and, on the other hand, an equally universal incompetence to give to that perception, any rational embodiment or form. The mere fact, and the inferences founded on that

fact, have been sundered by a gulf which has proved to be impassable by reason.

And there is no better proof of this than the course which human reason took when it first awoke to the exercise of its highest powers in the early Greek philosophy. It rebelled, not against the idea of the existence of gods, or of spiritual agencies in Nature, but against all the gross conceptions which poetic mythology had embalmed in the popular belief, as regarded the attributes of such Beings, and the parts they played in the government of man and of the world. Epicurus never dreamed of denying the existence of Divine Beings any more than the great Latin poet Lucretius, who has set forth his philosophy in imperishable verse. It may well be questioned, indeed, whether the counter-idea which they conceived of the nature and life of the gods, and which has been popularized, in verse not less beautiful, by Tennyson, is not an idea quite as irrational as any of those conceptions which it was intended to displace. It was, however, at least much less corrupting. It was better to think of the gods enjoying a life of imperturbable inactivity and repose, than to think of them as animating men with the fiercest passions, or demanding bloody sacrifices for themselves. But the necessity which the Epicurean philosophy felt to form some conception or another as to the nature of such spiritual Beings, is a signal testimony to the impossibility which they also felt of denying their existence altogether. This was an alternative which apparently never entered into their minds as even

conceivable. And this is all the more remarkable, since any influence, even the most unconscious, from what we now call the argument from design, was absolutely cut off in the case of gods who were divorced from all cares and from all activities. But the Epicurean philosophy affords a still more splendid proof of the impossibility of casting off from the human intellect the indelible impression of mind as the active agency in Nature. Materialistic as that philosophy is supposed to be, and as in a certain sense it intends to be, it is nevertheless in reality entirely spiritualistic in its ultimate conceptions. This is specially true of almost all that is most beautiful and attractive in the language of Lucretius, whose exposition of it has never lost its hold on the admiration of the world. For it is well to remember that this admiration has long rested on nothing but the vigour and beauty of the Lucretian verse. The system of thought which it represents satisfies no surviving school. In its negative aspect, indeed, in so far as it lends itself to the denial of what men call the supernatural, the Epicurean philosophy has still its own attractions for a certain number of minds; but as a system of philosophy which is in any degree constructive, which meets any intellectual difficulty, or satisfies any moral aspiration, it is as dead as the worship of any of the hideous divinities of the heathen world. 'To us,' says the best English editor and translator of Lucretius, 'the truth or falsehood of his system is of exceedingly little concern, except in so far as it is thereby rendered a better or a worse

vehicle for conveying the beauties of his language, and the graces of his poetical conceptions[1].' But there is more to be said than this—far more, indeed—in favour of Lucretius. Poets do not live so long as this poet has lived, on the strength merely of musical rhythm, of melodious measures, or even of striking images clothed in expressive words. Not even 'all the grace of all the Muses flashing in one lonely word' can do more than adorn some elements of thought which are beautiful only because they contain some element of truth.

Accordingly, when we come to analyze the poem of Lucretius, nothing is more remarkable than that same inconsistency which we have traced in the physical teachers of our own day, who try hardest to eliminate from their descriptions of physical phenomena, every element that involves the agency of purpose, personality, and design. Lucretius does not even try to do this, nor does he seem to be even conscious at all of the incongruity of his language with the speculative denials which it is the great aim of his poem to establish. He begins it with an invocation to the goddess, Venus, to inspire his verse. The Roman Venus is the Phoenician Astarte, the Ishtar of the Babylonian temples, and the Aphrodite of the Greeks. This may well seem to be a strange invocation for a poet whose passionate invective was directed against all the gods of heathendom. But his invective was directed entirely against the characters attributed to them, and to the results on human

[1] Munro's *Lucretius*, vol. ii. p. 96.

conduct which were the direct consequence of their worship. The famous line *tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*, 'such the desperate evils to which men have been persuaded by religion,' is a line perhaps more applicable to the worship of Venus than to the worship of any other of the gods whom Lucretius so hated and denounced. One excuse which has been made for Lucretius, in this matter, has been that he wrote his invocation simply in compliance with the conventional form or fashion taken by all ancient poetry. But this is no sufficient explanation unless we go deeper and ask how that customary form arose. It had become established simply from the universal belief of the ancient world that all poetry, and rhapsody, and song, could only be produced under the inspiration—the afflatus—of minds other and higher than their own.

The effect of one mind upon another in exciting, lifting, animating, and directing, must have been known and felt by all men since the race was born with an immense range of diverse qualities and gifts. It was one of the most obvious and universal facts observed and experienced in the world, and as the inspiring mind could only be conceived as a personality, some name representing a personality had always been found or invented for it. Nor was the recourse of Lucretius to this kind of invocation really so inconsistent as, at first sight, it may seem to be, with some of the fundamental doctrines of the Epicurean philosophy. One of those, and one of the best, was the

doctrine that the very essence of that which we call an explanation, must lie in bringing everything that we find it difficult to conceive, into the closest possible relation with all that is known and familiar. This is the secret of the universal tendency of mankind, even in its lowest conditions, to that kind of religious superstition which has been called 'Animism,' the tendency to see in all natural forces the working of that one great force of which we are conscious in ourselves, and by means of which we know that we can do much that seems closely analogous to the works of Nature. It was in perfect consistency with this doctrine that the idea of mind acting upon mind should be instinctively accepted by Lucretius, and that he should invoke some spiritual agency higher than his own, to inspire his verse. It was indeed far less inconsistent in him to do so than it is for any of us to deny and repudiate the very existence of what is called the supernatural, and yet to go on thinking and speaking of 'plans' in Nature as a necessity of thought, when we are endeavouring to explain the apparatuses, and contrivances, of which it is full to the brim. And it is of high interest to observe how largely the beauty, and power, and passion, of the Lucretian poem, depend on the genuine enthusiasm with which it is inspired by the conception of some personal mind as the ultimate agency in things. There is no finer passage in the whole poem than this opening invocation to Venus. But all its power, its passion, and its pathos, are inseparably connected with a Divine impersonation who is addressed as the

'sole mistress of the nature of things[1].' There can be no better example than this beautiful invocation of the wide distinction between the most angry revolt against the popular theology as to the nature and character of the gods, and the impossibility of even thinking of, or describing, the system of things in which we live, as under any guidance other than that of mind. Rising above all the grosser conceptions of mythology respecting the Goddess of Love, the poet addresses her as the animating spirit of the whole animal and vegetable world—the transmitter, if not the creator, of all beauty, life, and joy, as well in heaven as on earth. She becomes, in fact, in the poet's imagination, a supreme Divinity, with all the inalienable attributes of an active, living, all-pervading spirit. Nor is it less remarkable to observe what it is that he hates in the popular beliefs which were called religion, as well as what it is in nobler spiritual conceptions that he practically adores. He breaks ground at once in his attacks upon what he calls 'religion,' by specifying, in a passage of much power and pathos, the horrid practice of human sacrifices, which in many forms was so familiar to the ancient world, and was specially connected with the worship of the Asiatic Artemis. The slaughter of Iphigenia by her father on the altar of that goddess, is the typical legend which he accepts and denounces as a dreadful example of the cruel and impious rites which were inspired by the worship of the gods.

But the indignant denial of the existence of spiritual

[1] Munro's *Lucretius*, vol. i. p. 1.

beings with such attributes as these did not leave to the Epicurean philosopher or poet no other alternative than the denial of all spiritual agencies whatever. He had two resources open to him. First, he could, and he did, rely on the innate power of the human spirit itself in the exercise of its own reason; secondly, he could, and he did, rely on the help afforded to that spirit by a close communion with that other and supreme personality, which was thinly veiled under the great name of Nature. In both these conceptions he finds expression for his noblest poetry in praise of the Reason of man, and of that other Reason whose responsive aspects were conspicuous in the order, and in the law, of the external world. In the personality of his favourite philosopher, 'that first of the Greek race,' who first taught men to exercise their own intellect and conscience in revolting against the gods of the popular Pantheon, he recognizes a mind and spirit before which he pours out all the incense of a veritable worship. In the very act of praising him for delivering men from the fear of the gods, he testifies to his own consciousness of some higher conception of the Divine nature, by choosing the word 'god-like' as the highest expression he can use for expressing admiration. This, however, is but the smallest, and, as it were, the most merely incidental part of the testimony borne by Lucretius to the supremacy of mind. It is indeed impossible for him to do otherwise than to deny what is now called 'the supernatural,' for the simple reason that by the terms of his definition of 'Nature' it is a word for the sum

of all existence. It is an obvious contradiction in terms to conceive of anything outside of that sum[1]. We are thrown back on the question—What did he see in Nature, as part, and the most essential part, of its vast and eternal whole? The answer is not ambiguous. He denied—not indeed mind, but any supreme power of mind—in the Beings whom he called 'the gods,' but only to erect another agency, supreme over them as well as over all other beings, to which he gave the name of Nature; and to this supreme agency he habitually refers in the terms of personality, and as possessing every attribute which can go to make up one supreme Divinity. He speaks of Nature as the 'sole mistress[2]' of the constitution of things; as creating them out of elements, and dissolving them again: as 'not allowing' this, that, or the other; as 'jealously concealing' certain things; as 'governing things by secret bodies'; as 'preparing and fixing limits'; as the agent of assimilation in the building up of organic structures; as 'adjusting' the relations between things; as bringing the living out of the not living; as guiding and governing the heavenly bodies; as having set the first patterns or moulds for created things; in short as the universal 'parent and creatrix of things.'

But this is not all. Not only is Nature a personal Being endowed with commanding mind and intellect, but it is a personality to whom the highest moral feelings and desires are equally ascribed. Nature is spoken of as 'craving happiness for men,'

[1] Bk. v. 360, 361. [2] Bk. i. 26.

and as herself 'wanting no greater solace' than the taking away of pain. In that great Being the highest power is thus coupled with the highest benevolence. Nor is even this all that betrays in Lucretius the ineradicable conceptions which he derives from Nature of the presence and the power of a personal mind. Thus, just as in the English language the only word by which we can express the orderly rules under which we see that things are actually governed, is the word 'law'—the primary conception of which is that of an authoritative determination—so in the Latin language the word used by the poet is always 'ratio,' the primary conception of which is that of a reasoning, and a reasonable, will. Nor is it only in what may be called the scaffolding and machinery of speech, that this conception is represented. It penetrates, and permeates, the whole argument of the poem, and all the thoughts which that argument involves. Amidst the universal flux of things he sees that there must be something that is eternal. If there were not, he argues, everything would be confusion. He tries very hard to conceive of those eternal things as material atoms. But in making this attempt he is compelled to invest them with properties which do not belong to matter. They have extension, and yet they are without parts, and are incapable of division. In their purely physical aspect he describes them in terms closely corresponding with the modern scientific definition of a gas. They are infinitely small, and smooth; and they dart about in all directions with immense velocity. But

in their flight and in their collisions they are conceived of as 'trying' all possible combinations with each other, until at last they hit upon some which are fitting foundations for farther and higher adjustments. But the philosopher being conscious that this 'trying' cannot be fortuitous or unguided, escapes under the plea of Nature's being endowed with some powers utterly unknown to us[1]. The very name he uses for them indicates this. His English translator always renders that word as the 'first beginnings' of things. But neither these two words, nor the word 'elements' give a full rendering of the stereotyped expression used by Lucretius throughout his poem. The word he uses is always 'primordia.' But a 'primordium' is more than a mere element; and it is more than a 'first beginning'—unless we understand that phrase as meaning a first beginning, not of matter, nor of its elements, but of its adjusted combinations. A 'primordium' means a first-ordered thing—a first adjustment of mere elementary material. In this respect it stands on a level with the modern word invented for the same idea, 'protoplasm,' or the first moulded thing. But both these words assume as a preconception an 'ordering' or a 'moulding' agency. They are words denoting a first step in a particular direction, but they are no words at all for the higher agency which takes the step. That agency Lucretius does emphatically deny to have been the design or counsel of 'the gods' of the Pantheon, connecting as he does their designing with all that

[1] Bk. i. 779.

was trivial and corrupt in the spurious fancies of the popular mythology. But, in substitution for this hated association, he assumes the existence of a supreme reason and foresight in that great personality whom he calls Nature. Nothing can be finer than many of the conceptions which he reaches when looking at the resulting order of things from this point of view—nothing can be more penetrating, occasionally, than his interpretations. Some of them not only seem to anticipate by a sort of inspiration the most recent discoveries of physical science, but they see them in a higher and truer light than that which is only too familiar among ourselves. The mind of Lucretius is full of the idea of creation by development, that is to say, of creation by steps prepared in Time. But it is not less full of the conception that those steps had a rational direction such as alone would avert chaotic results. If the earth had been left to herself she would have produced monsters of all kinds. But Nature set limits on such confusion, and provided means whereby such hideous births should be brought to a speedy end. He has even a strange, but a clear vision of those

> 'dragons of the prime
> That tore each other in their slime,'

which were actually produced in former ages of the world. He sees that many of these must have existed, but have perished. Nor is he unacquainted with everything that is really true in the idea of 'natural selection' as an agency in the hands of Nature, for he points out the inherent qualities in each living creature

which enable it to survive, and he sees especially the significant fact of the development of the domesticable animals as creatures which have survived because they have been 'consigned to the protection of man[1]' by reason of their utility to him. Nor does he fail to have a glimpse, dim but effective, of that most mysterious of physical laws which has been unveiled to science—the great law of Chemical Affinity—in virtue of which the elements of matter have special attractions for each other in such fixed and definite ways, that they can be relied upon to produce special combinations by being placed in special relations of juxtaposition. This most powerful of all the tools or instruments of purpose in the production and building up of organic forms, is in principle clearly indicated by him. In his mind everything has depended on how the elements have been brought together. The idea of adjustment inspires his whole conception. And all this has been done, not by the gods, but by that one all-embracing creative mind which he calls Nature.

It is not difficult to see that although he condemned the belief in the immortality of the individual, because it was identified with the popular religion which to him was the source of all evil, he nevertheless assigned the highest value to the reason and the soul of man. Not only in the glorification—little short of worship—which he pours out upon the individual mind of his favourite philosophers, but in the idea he forms of the nature of intellect in itself,

[1] Bk. v. 855-875.

he assigns to it not only an exalted, but an extravagant elevation. It may be said, indeed, that one of the great flaws in all his reasoning, is that he makes the power of our possibly conceiving anything the measure of its possible reality. That which is inconceivable to the human mind is, of necessity, impossible in fact. He thinks, moreover, that the human will is so free as to be in itself uncaused, so that it represents an absolute beginning, or initiative, in its purposes and designs[1]. This is indeed a striking testimony to the inconceivability of any other final cause than that which we are conscious of in mind, and if this agency, so supreme and uncaused, as it seems to us to be within its own little sphere, be only connected with the farther idea of our own mind being a derivative from another mind which is universal, infinite, and supreme, then the thought of Lucretius is revealed to us in all its great significance. And, strange to say, he did very nearly attain to this conception, because in addition to his idea of the power of the human mind, he had a farther idea as to its source and origin, which supplies all that is needed for the most exalted theism. He says that we are all from 'celestial seed,' thus repeating that saying of certain Greek poets quoted by St. Paul in his speech at Athens, 'for we also are His offspring.' He speaks of a great 'intellect as Godlike[2],' and he regards all the order and bearing of the world as the work of that which he enshrines in 'Nature.' All the most beautiful passages in his poem, are those which are

[1] Bk. ii. 266-280. [2] Bk. iii. 15

inspired by this idea. They are indeed immeasurably inferior to the innumerable passages in the Hebrew prophets and Psalmists, which express the same conception carried to its only consistent and intelligible result, namely, the will and agency of one only God. But although so inferior, they breathe nevertheless as much of the same spirit as was attainable by a mind to which this idea had not been fully brought out into the light of consciousness. It is only checked and apparently contradicted by the poet's just detestation of the popular theology—that is to say of the inferences as to the seat and nature of the Divine mind, which had been embodied in the heathen Pantheon, and in the heathen worship. But when he can get rid of this baleful association, and when he struggles to express his own higher conceptions, his language universally assumes that the highest reason is also the highest cause of things.

His principle of interpretation is often the same as that which we have heard in the language of Cuvier—if certain adjustments had not been made, then certain consequences must have followed. But as these consequences would have been disasters, the adjustments were in due course provided. This is, obviously, the language of teleology, and of nothing else; and so high does he rise in his conception of the beauty, and order, and significance of Nature, that he compares its infinitely subtle adjustments to those by which individual words can be worked up into a poem. This is indeed a powerful and far-reaching analogy. When we remember the unfathomed mysteries of

human speech—how in its essence and function it is universally the same, and yet how in its mere forms it is so various and local; how its elements as mere sounds are functions of an elaborate organic apparatus; how its combinations of those elements into vocables and words, are so closely and exclusively the work of mind that Professor Max Müller considers language to be identical with thought—we can appreciate the profound significance of the identification which has forced itself upon the thought of the great Epicurean poet and philosopher. That the system of Nature should present itself irresistibly to that most sceptical intellect, as best imaged in the structure, origin, and import of man's highest speech to man, is a striking testimony indeed to the true character of that system as estimated by one of the most powerful minds of the heathen world. It corresponds exactly to the Christian conception of Nature which the American poet Longfellow presents to us in his address to the great naturalist Agassiz, on one of his birthdays—

> And Nature, the old Nurse, took
> The child upon her knee,
> Saying, 'Here is a story-book
> Thy Father has written for thee.
>
> Come, wander with me,' she said,
> 'Into regions yet untrod,
> And read what is still unread
> In the manuscripts of God.'

The truth is that everything of mental power which Lucretius denies with passion to the Beings whom alone he knew as 'the gods,' he attributes, with

infinite additions, to that one agency which he calls Nature. To that agency the gods themselves were subservient, their very existence due to it, and all the peace and serenity in which he supposed them to abide[1]. There is one most remarkable passage where Lucretius in the very conduct and conception of his argument against any belief that the world has been framed by design on the part of the gods, betrays his full consciousness of the necessity, as a fact, that design in the very highest definition of it, must have existed somewhere, and must have presided over the creative work. What, he asks, could possibly have induced the gods to trouble themselves with such a work when they were in the enjoyment of perfect happiness, in a passive yet satisfying enjoyment? Then follows a sketch of the conditions under which alone such a work could have been begun or carried on. There must have been some far-reaching exercise of forethought, some preconception as to what it would be desirable to make, and some guide to the steps to be taken in the making. 'Whence,' asks the poet, 'was first implanted in the gods a pattern for begetting things in general, as well as the preconception of what men are, so that they knew, and saw in mind, what they wanted to make?' Then Lucretius puts the farther question which carries one step farther the evidence that he did not regard the necessary instrumentality of physical causes, as any difficulty whatever in this true and just conception of that in which design essentially consists, namely, the fore-

[1] Bk. iii. 23, 24, &c.

thought of a conceiving mind. 'In what way,' he asks, 'was the power of the primordial elements ever ascertained, and what could they effect by a change in their mutual arrangements?' These striking words seem almost to anticipate the special idea of chemical affinity, by which, perhaps, more is done than by any other in the mechanism of creation. But the words point to, or embrace, a larger and wider conception still, namely this—that it is by special combination of the elementary bodies and the elementary forces, that all design must work as we know it in ourselves, and that all design appears to us to work as we know and see it, as a fact, in Nature. Accordingly, the solution suggested by Lucretius is that which makes Nature the one supreme agency which alone can account for the system in which we live. The gods must have been helpless, he argues, 'unless Nature herself gave the model for making things[1].'

The truth is that the passionate hostility felt by Lucretius, against all that he understood by the word 'religion,' was an hostility directed, not at all against the mere conception of mind as the supreme power in Nature, but against those embodiments of the conception, and those representations as to the character and action of the gods in whom that mind was supposed to reside, which inspired the popular ideas of worship. These, in all the forms they took as known to him, he despised and abhorred. By a process of reasoning, which is by no means clear, or rather probably from an accidental association of ideas, which had come to be

[1] Bk. v. 180–186.

inseparable in his mind, he connected all those forms of worship, and all the motives which actuated the conduct of men in connexion with them, to the belief in the immortality of the individual soul. The evidence which his language affords, of the extent to which the terrors attached to this belief affected the heathen world in his day, is very curious, and in some respects very surprising. He represents almost all men as habitually under all sorts of imagined horrors respecting the fate of their souls after death. The picture he presents of this fear, of its prevalence and its power, corresponds very closely with the language of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when he speaks of those 'who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage[1].' It is not easy to understand how Lucretius could think that the idea of annihilation by death, would tend to make men more virtuous. The argument as affecting conduct seems rather to lie in the opposite direction—'Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.' But then it is to be remembered that those higher motives which we connect with the belief in the immortality of the individual soul, are due entirely to those other and farther conceptions connected with the consequences of virtue in another life, which are inseparably connected with our ideas of a supreme mind which delights in justice, goodness, and truth. If we couple the belief in our immortality with the farther belief that both in this world and in the next, we are to be under the rule of Beings so cruel,

[1] Heb. ii. 15.

corrupt, violent, and capricious, as the heathen gods were continually represented to be in the popular religion, then, indeed, we understand the intense feeling of Lucretius that the belief was nothing but an unmitigated source of evil, and that the first duty of reason and philosophy was to disabuse the human mind of such a pestilent superstition. But the disbelief in the immortality of the individual soul, however destructive it may be to all our own ideas of religion in its best influences on men, has nothing whatever to do with any disbelief in mind as the supreme agency in 'Nature.' It may be according to the will and design of that mind that the life of man should be as evanescent as the life of a gnat is always conceived by us to be. This is theoretically conceivable, and yet it is touching to notice that even in this matter Lucretius unconsciously betrays his instinctive feeling that some personal and individual immortality is the only fitting destiny of a great and good man. This comes out in the poet's enthusiastic eulogium on Epicurus as the one great deliverer of humanity from the curse of religion in the promulgation of his philosophy. For this great service to his kind he deserved the highest conceivable reward —and what was that? It was no other than that immortality of life which it was his boast to have banished as a motive from the world.

But the inconsistency of ideas which the language of the poet on this point implies, is only part, and a very small part, of the insuperable difficulty which he could not overcome in avoiding the language of design in

his laborious attempts to depict and account without it for the beauties and harmonies of the world. It is the same insuperable difficulty which we have traced throughout even the most guarded language of modern physicists, and which, when the attempt is cast aside by those who do not seek to avoid or suppress what they do actually and really see in Nature, gives place invariably to the most full and pronounced teleological descriptions of all its phenomena. Neither the theory of development or evolution, nor any other theory respecting the steps or processes of creation, can touch the evidence of mind in Nature. The development of intention pursues us everywhere as the most conspicuous of all the facts hitherto discovered. The very idea of fortuity is repugnant to true science. And we must always remember what fortuity means. It does not mean the occurrence of phenomena which have no physical cause, because none such exist, and the existence of such is strictly to us inconceivable in thought. What fortuity means, is the occurrence of phenomena where physical causation is under no intelligent guidance or direction, no guidance which regards the future, and which provides for it, so that development shall take an orderly and foreseen direction. But this guidance is precisely one of the great characteristics which science, as we have seen, has identified as inseparable from all organic evolution. This is the characteristic which makes the presence of mind in Nature, a fact, and not an inference, one of the self-evident truths which are directly and intuitively perceived by the human mind

whenever it attempts to record in speech that which it sees and knows in Nature.

Science has done a great service of late, in carrying this fact back into the history of a past which indeed is certainly not infinite, but which is nevertheless immense. The history of animal life as a whole has been revealed to us in geology as having run a course analogous to the development of the individual organism. It has been an orderly march from low to higher forms, though the steps in detail have not been traced, nor the exact method of the transitions. Some agency beyond, and above, the mere mechanical idea of natural selection, has certainly provided, beforehand, the fittest adaptations for survival, and has seen to it that they took a definite direction. This has been strikingly expressed in a recent work, by one of the most eminent of the younger school of paleontologists, in the following passage of his *History of the Mammalia*: 'The evolution of a family like the Titanotheres, presents an uninterrupted march in one direction. While apparently prosperous and attaining a great size, it was really passing into a great "corral" of inadaptation to the grasses which were introduced in the middle miocene. So with other families and lesser lives, extinction came in at the end of a term of development and high specialization. With other families no cause for extinction can be assigned, as in the lopping off of the smaller miocene baissodactyls. The point is that a certain trend of development is taken, leading to an adaptive or inadaptive first issue. But extinction or survival

of the fittest, seems to exert little influence *en route*. The changes *en route* lead us to believe either in predestination, a kind of internal perfecting tendency, or a kineto-genesis. For the trend of evolution is not the happy resultant of many trials, but is heralded in structures of the same form all the world over, and in age after age, by similar minute changes advancing irresistibly from inutility to utility. It is an absolute, definite, and lawful progression. The infinite number of contemporary, developing, degenerating, and stationary characters, precludes the possibility of fortuity. There is some law introducing and regulating each of those variations, as in the variations of individual growth[1].'

This is a great pronouncement, and the power of the analogy which it asserts illuminates all the facts as no other could, because it is the very essence of the growth of every individual organism, that it is a plan—a structure beginning in the complete absence of any function, but steadily advancing to more and more complete adaptations for functional work, which is yet lying in the future. It is in this one great aspect that the history of organic life, as a whole in the past, is seen and recognized by the eye of science as strictly analogous to the growth and development of the individual in the present time, and thus we have a new evidence of a direct and immediate perception of the work of mind. It is the ultimate result of

[1] Professor Osborne, *Rise of the Mammalia in North America*, 1893. Address to American Association for the Advancement of Science, August 17, 1893.

the highest generalizations on the history of life in our world—a work beginning in a time immeasurably remote, and carried on through steps, and through cycles of change, which we are wholly unable to follow in detail. All the recent theories of development or evolution which have made so much noise in the world, whether in the hands of Lamarck, or of Darwin, or of Weissman, are simply endeavours to guess what the steps have been, and how the direction of them has been determined. As regards the general fact that they have been somehow directed under the operation of some law, it matters nothing how far those guesses have been imperfect or erroneous. That they have been both, in a high degree, seems quite certain. But except in so far as they are aimed at the substitution of fortuity for purposiveness, they may be treated as of no significance in our present inquiry. It matters nothing, as regards the purposiveness of results, whether the steps to attainment can be followed more or less imperfectly, or not at all.

There is, however, an important distinction to be observed between the relation of each organ to its own special work in the plan of every individual creature, and the corresponding relation of new species to any special work in the general plan of all organic life. That connexion between any living apparatus and its work, to which we give the name of function, is a connexion perfectly definite, clear, and certain. It is no matter of reasoning or of mere inferences. It is always more intelligible, and generally more true than any of those relations to time, or space,

or force, of which the physical sciences take special note. But the connexion between any creature as a whole, and the rest of creation in the present and in the future, is seldom, if ever, so definite or so certain. Thus, for example, the relation between teeth, or sets of teeth, and the function of seizing prey and tearing their flesh, is an object of direct perception and of indisputable certainty. But the relation between an age in which almost all carnivorous animals were reptiles, and the general plan of organic life, is by no means so obvious. This is one of the many facts which indicate a process, but not directly or immediately any purpose. At first sight, at least, it does not even indicate what Professor Osborne calls a 'progress from inutility to utility,' because the reptiles of the secondary ages in geology were as usefully constructed for their own living as any other creatures. But the age of reptiles does indicate one stage in the steps of a progress from low, to comparatively higher, organisms in the evolution of life. And in this progress we see correspondences and adaptations which again bring purpose into view, because nothing is more striking in the history of organic life, than the growing adaptation between the new forms of life and the function which many of them do now actually discharge with reference to man. We can hardly estimate how different this life of ours would have been, and would now be, if the beasts and birds which are capable of domestication, were omitted from the world. Without sheep and oxen, and without the horse, we could not use or enjoy life as we do now.

Yet we know that all of these were introduced very recently, and in a special correlation, as to time, with the introduction of our own species. Fortuity is indeed, as Professor Osborne says, inconceivable in such a case as this; and it becomes all the more inconceivable since the long gradations have been discovered which connect the horse, for example, with forms which would have been useless to men for the purposes which no other animal is capable of fulfilling. The truth is that the immense and exclusive part played in human life by the ruminants, and by the horse, corresponds more nearly than any other adaptation to the definite and certain relationship in which the function of individual organs consists.

There is a wide gap, in this respect, when we pass from the organic to the inorganic world. The adaptations in the inorganic world are as pervading as in the organic, and are indeed, to a large extent, the same, inasmuch as the adaptation of organisms is, and must be, an adaptation to conditions in the external world. They are parallel and correlative. But, in the inorganic sphere, they are what we may describe as general, and not particular. The adaptations of mineral carbon, for example, in the shape of coal, to the wants of man, is a conspicuous example. Coal is, indeed, in its origin an organic product. But it belongs to the inorganic world now. The preparation of it and the storage of it as a source of energy in the bowels of the earth, has had an obvious purpose in the function it now discharges. But we

cannot see any law, either mental or material, in the selection of the very partial areas where it was produced, or of those from which it has been swept away by subsequent denudation. On the other hand, when we come to look at the much larger questions connected with the atomic and molecular constitution and combinations of the material elements of the inorganic world, the more we know, and the more we have lately discovered, the more clear it is that those elements and combinations are governed by laws which are distinctly and emphatically purposive. They are extremely complicated, and involve differences of inherent properties, and of forces operating between them, on the nice adaptations of which the whole of the organic world depends. In that higher world itself, as we have seen, purposive adaptation is no matter of mere inference, but is so much the object of direct perception that the most ordinary descriptions of phenomena, as well as the most recondite and scientific, cannot escape from the recognition of it. But the indisputable unity of Nature precludes us from supposing even the possibility of this characteristic being confined to one region of Nature alone. What Professor Osborne says so forcibly of the organic world, is equally true of the inorganic, when we regard it in all its parts, namely, that the infinite complexity of its arrangements and adaptations 'preclude the possibility of fortuity.' The organic is in this matter the key to the inorganic. Life, as the highest thing we know in Nature, is the explanation of all its elementary laws, and of all their

combinations. It is the interpreter of them in the highest sense, because it constantly throws a clear light on the 'Why' when the 'How' remains shrouded in an impenetrable secrecy.

One of the causes which has prevented us from seeing clearly the objective reality of purposive adaptation in Nature, has been the confusion of thought which leads us to assume that purpose cannot be seen at all unless it is seen exhaustively—that unless all the purposes are seen which any given adaptation serves, no one result can be identified as in itself purposive at all. This is one of the many ideas which are accepted not only as difficulties, but very often as insuperable barriers in the way of conclusions which would otherwise be certain. But it is an idea which is quite unsound. Even in human contrivances and apparatuses there are often parts which have more than one function, and discharge more than one duty, in the working of the whole. And if this be true of the machines by which we accomplish our narrow and bounded aims, how much more must it be true of the machinery of Nature, all parts of which are both the products of an infinite past, and also links with an inexhaustible future. Instead of being puzzled or surprised by finding that we never can see, or follow, more than a mere fraction of the ends secured by natural laws, and by the adaptations of them, we ought to feel and understand without difficulty how this must be so, and how powerless the fact ought to be to shake, in the least, our confidence in the relation between means and ends,

when they can, in any instance, be clearly seen. This would be a sufficient argument even if it stood alone, and if it were impossible for us to understand the case of complicated, and even in a sense, of opposing purposes, being provided for in the operation of natural laws in combinations which are perfectly intelligible to us. A signal example is presented to us in one case taken by Tennyson to illustrate the difficulties which lie in purposes which seem to be not only unfulfilled but frustrated. It is the case, beautifully expressed, in section LV of *In Memoriam*, where the destruction of life, and of the seeds of life, which is one of the great features of the organic world, is referred to as a difficulty in our trust and hope that

> Nothing walks with aimless feet,
> That not one life shall be destroyed,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete.

Then follow the words in the section referred to:

> That I, considering everywhere,
> Her secret meaning in her deeds,
> And finding that of fifty seeds
> She often brings but one to bear,
>
> I falter where I firmly trod, &c.

Now here we have the idea that, because the primary purpose of all seeds is undoubtedly that they should 'bear,' that purpose seems to fail when they are otherwise disposed of. Yet when we come to think of it for a moment, we must see that unless more seeds were produced than are enough for the purposes of reproduction, another purpose, quite as obvious, could never be attained, inasmuch as the

whole sustenance of a large, and of the highest part, of the organic world, consists in the overplus of seeds produced beyond the needs of reproduction. What would become of bread—the staff of life—if, for example, the cereals did not produce even more than 'fifty seeds' for consumption to every one seed required for reproduction? It is the same in innumerable other cases. The millions of ova produced by a herring and by other fishes, are the main nourishment of higher creatures, and our reason has no difficulty in such cases in seeing that a great variety of purposes may be—and in the system of Nature must be—secured by contrivances, which at first sight seem to have only one.

This, indeed, is no exception. It is the universal law which we see prevailing now, and which geology enables us clearly to see has prevailed through all the past ages of creation. It is a mere confusion of thought which regards various, opposite, and even apparently contradictory purposes, as inconsistent with the objective reality and certainty of that intrinsic relation which connects an apparatus with its special work. It is a relation which in its own nature belongs to the realm of mind; and the only conclusion suggested by the facts of variety, and of complexity, is that the mind which we see exhibited in Nature is one so vast and so far-reaching, that its working, its aims, and its methods, can only be very imperfectly understood. There is nothing incongruous, still less contradictory, in the two parts of this conception. On the contrary

they are thoroughly natural, and consistent with all that we see and know around us, and it may well be added, with all that we see and know within us. There are many things concerning ourselves of which we are absolutely certain, whilst of their history in the past, of many of their relations with the present, and of their consequences in the future, we are as profoundly ignorant. But although the conception and the consciousness of very limited and very imperfect knowledge, is familiar to us, and does not in the least affect the certainty with which many things are perceived and known, the form which this conception takes as regards theology, is very striking, and one full of far-reaching consequences. For it is the result of all the evidence we have adduced, that, whilst it is certain that the system in, and under, which we live, is a system governed by, and saturated with, the power of mind, we have no similarly direct and certain evidence as to the seat of that mind, or as to any of its characters, other than those of power and purpose, or, above all, as to its relations with our own heart, and intellect, and will. This is seen to be the final result of all close inquiry into what is called natural religion, but which is here called Intuitive Theology. It cannot accurately be said to be religion at all, because the bare conception of the existence of a supreme mind, does not constitute a religion. What is universally meant and understood by that word is some system of belief, however vague or rude, concerning those relations between that mind and our own which, we admit, ought to influence us

more or less, whether in worship or in conduct. At first sight it might appear that the only certainty which we have established — the universal presence and power of mind in Nature, is one not worth establishing, as being in itself a barren and unfruitful truth. Even if this could not be denied we should be none the less bound to admit that truth on the one hand, and to keep within it on the other. But the alleged barrenness of this certainty can be denied, and can be disproved. It is one of the blessed results of the unity of Nature that there are in it no such things as isolated and unfruitful truths. Every truth has its own inseparable relations with many more, and it is so above all, as we shall see, with that truth which we have been concerned with here.

The great truth which has been reached by the preceding analysis is this—that the universal presence and power of mind in Nature, which has been well called in one word its purposiveness, is not a mere inference, or the result of any conscious reasoning, but is a fact apprehended by direct, immediate, and self-evident perception; so much so that the perpetual acknowledgement and expression of it cannot be escaped in describing natural phenomena, even by those who are most desirous of avoiding or suppressing it.

It is so important to define to ourselves the exact bearing and boundaries of this proposition that it may be well to compare it with, and to distinguish it from, other propositions with which it may easily be confounded. It must not be confounded, for example,

with the famous argument of Locke on the evidence of a God, or with any other similar form of reasoning resorted to by theistic writers. Locke's argument may be perfectly sound, but it is an argument, and does not even profess to represent the direct force of a self-evident proposition. His argument does indeed start from, and rest upon, as all reasoning must do, certain self-evident propositions; and these propositions do stand in close connexion with that one direct perception of purposiveness in Nature which is asserted here. But Locke's fundamental proposition is essentially different. It is that we are directly conscious of ourselves, and of an external world. This is his fundamental postulate or axiom. His next step is, that the self-existence of which we are thus directly conscious is the self-existence of an intelligent and reasoning being. His third step is, that as mind and reason cannot be conceived by us as coming from dead matter, it follows that our intelligence must have come from another intelligence, which is the source and origin of all others. Whether this argument is sound or not, it is obviously in the nature of an argument; and the conclusion it arrives at, however valid, is certainly not one reached by a direct perception. In affirming the self-evident existence of an internal world it does indeed touch the borders of the special proposition which we have dwelt on here. But it fails to notice or to grasp it. If an essential part of that other and external world, which we do also certainly perceive, be its purposiveness, then we have no need to seek for any argument,

however sound, in favour of the existence of some other mind than our own. We do not conclude, but we see, and absolutely know, that purpose is one of the most characteristic of all the manifestations of mind as we know it in ourselves; and even if we were to admit as possible or conceivable that our own mind may have had some separate origin from that other mind which we see in Nature, still the perception of that other mind remains unshaken, as an indisputable fact.

If Locke had thoroughly analyzed all that is meant by, and included in, what he calls the external world, he need not have gone any further, so far as the mere existence in that world of a supreme mind is concerned. He would have seen that it is independent of any argument, that it is the essential element in all that is the subject of our self-evident perceptions. And then, if he had gone one step further in that analysis, he would have reached the highest point to be attained in this region of self-evident propositions. He could not have failed to see that the distinction, which he assumes between the external world and ourselves, is a distinction which cannot be logically maintained. Both in body and in mind we are certainly parts of Nature, and the alleged externality of it as regards us—that separability of it from ourselves—which is assumed, breaks down the moment it is examined. This is no obscure doctrine of metaphysics. It is reflected in the common language of life. We all habitually speak of our bodily frames as being, in many of their most obvious aspects, part

of the external world to us. We know that they are as full of mechanical and chemical purposiveness as the bodies of the lower animals. Incomprehensible as the connexion is between our inner and outward selves, we know, as a fact, that our senses and our reason are under the same conditions of adaptation to purpose in the discharge of functions; so that in ourselves the external and the internal worlds meet, and we are the image and embodiment of both. The presence of purposiveness, which is so striking elsewhere, is nowhere more striking than in the structure of our own organism, with all its separate apparatuses for the discharge of separate and special functions. What we see, therefore, by direct perception in that province of Nature which we loosely call external, is also seen by us not less evidently by the same direct perception as internal in ourselves—namely, the presence and the power of mind as the supreme agency which is concerned in the production and co-ordination of all our own faculties and powers.

Nor are the whole contents of our direct perception fully exhausted until we have brought home to our own understandings what is meant by mind as exhibited in all purposeful arrangements. The recognition of a mind is the recognition of something that we know, and the one leading feature by which we do so recognize it, is purpose. We know this better than we know anything else in the world. It is identified with the ordinary action of our will. It is, in short, all that constitutes what we call ourselves, our individuality, our personality. It differs essen-

tially from all that we can see in the physical forces, and it agrees with all that we do most certainly know as characteristic of ourselves in the use we make of these forces, as the only tools with which we can work out our own designs. Here, therefore, we see again, not as a consequence worked out by argument, but as a part of the fact which is directly seen, that we have the distinct conception of a personal mind as an object of our immediate recognition in the whole of Nature.

This appears to me to be the summit level in the path towards religion to which we are carried by the certainties of direct and immediate perception. It may be well, therefore, to rest for a moment at the point we have thus attained, and to estimate as clearly as we can its exact bearing and elevation. Again, we must recognize the fact that our self-evident truth does not constitute religion. It does not in itself include any further and more definite conceptions or beliefs on our own relations with that personal mind of whose existence we are so well assured. Yet it is in such further conceptions and beliefs that religion, properly so called, alone consists. On the other hand, let us not mistake the breadth and solidity of the foundations which are laid in, and by, the assured apprehension, as a fact, that in Nature, ourselves included, we are in the presence of a mind which has all the elements of what we know as personality in ourselves. It at once illuminates Nature with the light of an impressive and dominating conception. It involves the idea—not as

a consequence reached by reasoning, but as part of its own nature and contents—that we are always in the presence of a mind which has some such close relations with our own, that we can recognize, at least, its constructive powers as analogous to our own; and can identify these, as exerted in our own organism, as the highest type known to us of their working and effects.

Again and again let it be repeated that this powerful conception does not, in itself and undeveloped, constitute religion. But it does raise to the high level of a self-evident truth that one fundamental fact with which all religious feelings and beliefs must begin, and on which alone they can and always do repose. The moment this truth is apprehended in its fullness, it becomes impossible to set religion aside as belonging to a region of mere fancy or imagination, with no substance in it. The very first inference that follows from it, hardly less self-evident than itself, is that there must be some other relations between us and the universal mind, than that only of our being a product of its constructive skill. There must be some spiritual and ethical relations corresponding to the ethical and spiritual faculties of which we are conscious in ourselves. For these, too, like all others, we know to be gifts inseparably connected with our special organization. The subject, therefore, of these other relations rises upon us as not only a region in which facts must abound, but as a region filled with the very highest class of facts which we can ever reach. In their very essence they

must be the supreme facts of the universe. They must be the facts on which some fuller knowledge is the most to be longed for – by all to whom the quest of truth is the one pursuit of supreme interest and importance. This is a consideration of high significance. For as there is no kind of doubt so paralyzing, in any subject of inquiry, as any—even the very least—suspicion that perhaps, after all, there is nothing in it to be inquired about—that the very pursuit of it is in itself a delusion, a mere dream, a phantasy—so, on the other hand, there is nothing so inspiring as the certainty, in any such inquiry, that we are dealing with veritable realities, and are handling problems which concern facts indisputable, and, if indisputable, then all-pervading. And when this certainty is perpetually receiving, as we have seen it is receiving, ever fresh and accumulating illustrations from the analysis of all around us, it silences and extinguishes for ever any suggestions that in theology we can possibly be dealing with mere subjective phenomena, the unsubstantial products of our own imaginative faculties. Whether this extreme form of doubt is widely prevalent, it would be hard to say. But it clearly forms a large ingredient in the philosophic scepticism of many writers both old and new. It is under the influence of this extreme form of doubt that such vehement antagonism exists to the recognition of purposiveness in Nature, and that so many attempts are made to resolve it, and dissolve it, into such deceptive ambiguities as those which are hid under the phrases of development and evolution. But no element of

fact which does really exist in these phrases is incompatible with, or even antagonistic to, the one great fundamental perception of the universal purposiveness in Nature which we have now identified as a self-evident truth. On the contrary, the idea of all purposes being attained generally, at least, by gradual steps and slow degrees, and always by the employment of appropriate means, whether these be slow or rapid, is an idea not only strictly cognate with, but is an inseparable part of, the purposiveness which we see and know in Nature as a self-evident characteristic of all its operations. There can be no question, therefore, of the power of this fundamental truth to dispel, and disabuse our minds of, that extreme form of doubt—that misgiving, if it be nothing more —which relegates all theological conceptions to the region of fancy. There can be no doubt of its immense intellectual value in establishing theology as a science, that is to say, as a branch of knowledge, which not only concerns some realities, but concerns the very highest realities of life and of the world. Whether these realities can in any greater measure become known to us, and, if so, in what measure and by what means—this is a further question, not directly decided by the one self-evident proposition which we have identified, but needing further consideration and inquiry.

It would, however, be of little value to us to see as a self-evident truth the existence around us, and within us, of this one great fact of supreme interest and importance, if we think that we have no faculties

which can possibly enable us to apprehend its consequences even in the least degree. And this is undoubtedly the idea which distresses and paralyzes many minds, whilst others are reconciled by it to an attitude of complete indifference. But we have not exhausted the contents of the one self-evident truth which we have come to recognize as such, unless we see that these contents do bear directly on this paralyzing idea, and are strong enough to redeem us from it. What are all self-evident truths? They are the results of an intimate adjustment between our reasoning faculties and the ultimate truths of Nature. As such, therefore, they carry with them, into the innermost recesses of our own mental structure, that same character of purposiveness which we have identified as supreme in all things around us. They rest on perceptions which are intuitive—that is to say, which are born with us, and in us, as the natural consequences of an adapted structure. This is a conception which has the widest application to our powers of apprehending truth. There is no reason to believe that it has any limit. For, at least, if there be limits, we do not know them, seeing that such limits as we do know, and of which we have much painful experience, are obviously rather limits of opportunity than absolute limits of power. Moreover, they never give us the impression of even suggesting any doubt on the truthfulness of our knowledge up to the point at which they stop us. They are barriers on further advances for the time, and perhaps sometimes for ever. But they throw no backward shadows on past

steps so far as they have gone. On the contrary, they leave untouched, or even confirmed, all the combinations of reason by which these steps have been established.

It is on this high question—namely, the natural adjustments between our own reason and the laws of what is called external Nature—that a splendid light has been thrown by the advance of the physical sciences. We call them by that name because their subject-matter lies in that region which we distinguish as physical. But we must remember that they are also metaphysical in a very high degree. More and more the physical sciences have come to involve, and rest upon, some of the most difficult abstract conceptions of the mind which it is possible for us to entertain. Yet we find these abstract conceptions safe guides in the interpretation, and even constantly in the prediction, of phenomena of the most complicated kind. Nor is it less remarkable that the physical sciences have made us familiar with the idea that these abstract conceptions are not less absolutely safe and true because, beyond a certain point, they may be absolutely inscrutable. We handle them and employ them without knowing even in the least degree their ultimate origin or nature. This is true of all the sciences which deal with the relations of matter to space, to time, to force, to energy, and above all to our own mental constitution. In all these conceptions we very soon reach limitations on our knowledge which are insuperable, and which leave in the deepest mystery much that we do most earnestly desire to

know. Nevertheless this does not seem in the least degree to render our use of these conceptions to be doubtful, or our knowledge of them to be inapplicable.

We are dealing, therefore, with an established fact and principle, in all departments of our knowledge, when we say that the limitations upon it do not affect its truthfulness, or our just confidence in its certainty. And when we apply this principle to the self-evident proposition of the purposefulness of Nature, we may be sure of that application being not only legitimate, but of its being absolutely demanded by the facts. The very existence of self-evident truths has a direct bearing on theology, which it has not in any other science whatever, because it throws a special and far-reaching light on the possibility of further knowledge being arrived at through means which are strictly analogous. The instinctive and intuitive perception of any truth is in the nature of what we call inspiration, that is to say, it is not the result of conscious reasoning. On the contrary, it is the basis on which all such reasoning itself reposes. Obviously, we can conceive it to be exalted to any extent, since we see in it, as a fact, the existence of some inborn means of communication between the mind which we recognize in Nature and the derivative intelligence which we feel to be our own.

There are some truths which, when clearly seen, and firmly grasped, have a power over our conceptions out of all proportion to the mere logical consequences which are apparent at first sight. This power lies,

not merely in the cognate ideas which such truths render familiar, but especially in the antagonistic ideas which they expel. They change, and may often reverse as it were, the whole attitude of the mind on certain subjects. They open it to perceptions which had been before asleep, and they close its doors against adverse preconceptions which had been only too active. The sense and the conviction that both in what we call external Nature, and also in our own internal nature, we are in the constant presence of a personal mind other than our own, is one of these powerful truths. In the light of it that vulgar distinction which has become so common in modern thought, between 'the natural' and the 'supernatural' vanishes in a moment. It shows that we are not called upon to believe in any presence or power outside of what we call Nature, which we do not also see, as a self-evident fact, inside of Nature. It makes us feel at once that instead of there being any antecedent improbability of there being divers degrees and methods of communication between the universal mind and our own, the antecedent probability is altogether in the opposite direction, because it reveals this mind of our own as itself an adapted apparatus—a product of that other mind which is infinitely great to us, and of whose contrivances it is a direct result. The high origin to which this connexion traces the very structure of all our intellectual powers, and of all our spiritual aspirations, carries with it a most firm and rational confidence that when these faculties are carefully and conscientiously used, they may come

under illuminations which are cognate with the light of our other intuitions, and may then be competent to carry us to higher and higher knowledge of those other and still more important truths which we know do and must exist, but which, to a great extent, are veiled from our previously unopened eyes.

And this very hiddenness—its nature and extent—has an immense significance for us. In fact we cannot exhaust the full contents of that one truth on which we have been dwelling so long, until we have defined to ourselves what its limitations are. It is no separate truth, but an essential part of the same truth, that the direct and intuitive recognition of a personal mind, does not of itself amount to any acquaintance with the nature of that mind, beyond its possession of knowledge, and of will, and of power, and of constructive ingenuity—all to an extent, and under the control of methods, which are inconceivable to us. It is part of its direct contents that this universal mind is—to employ the strong old English word—the Maker of the world, and of ourselves as part of it. But it does not, with the same directness, tell us anything of any characteristics of that mind, nor of any of its relations to our own, other than those of constructive origin or authorship. But this limitation is in itself a part of the fact so intuitively seen, which throws a powerful light on the methods to be pursued in any dealing with those further problems which nearer relations must involve. If on these further problems no light is cast by the intuitive faculty which recognizes nothing but a mere constructive mind, even

although practically infinite in its ingenuity and resource, then we become conscious of a limit beyond which lies a vast region where our natural ignorance is profound. This consciousness is the legitimate foundation of a true and genuine agnosticism. Its first rational consequence is to inculcate upon us an almost measureless humility in the use and application of our faculties to the problems which lie within that region. But it does not demand, nor does it even permit, the abdication of those faculties; nor does it even consist with the notion that no such faculties exist. The natural ignorance of which we are conscious, although indeed profound, is not absolute. If it were absolute we could not be conscious of it. We do, at least, know this about the region of our ignorance, that it is not empty. We know that it must be full of facts inseparably connected with those which run up to the boundary and margin of the unknown, and which are presumably cognate with them. The disposition, therefore, or attitude of mind, which our consciousness of ignorance ought to take, is humility, but not cowardice. It ought to give us a high sense of the difficulty of using our arms with effect. It ought never to tempt us to lay them down. Our desire of knowledge does not cease where our unaided powers of acquiring it seem to stop. It is according to all the analogies of our intellectual experience that recognition is possible in respect to truth, where to us discovery would have been impossible.

It is not, therefore, any total distrust of our own faculties, in the highest regions of thought, that is im-

pressed upon us by the humility of a true agnosticism; but it is a total distrust of one particular method of employing them. They cannot spin out of their substance and structure, abstract and purely speculative propositions which can be employed as tests of truth. Abstract conceptions we do, indeed, continually form in the physical sciences, but the validity of these conceptions depends entirely on the truthfulness and accuracy with which they are abstracted from objective facts. In the absence of such facts they could not be reached at all, and they are only trustworthy in so far as they are found to correspond always with observation and experience. We must be aware of first admitting, and even claiming, total ignorance of objective truth in any region, and then assuming such deep knowledge as enables us to lay down abstract and dogmatic conceptions so clear and valid, that on the strength of them we can refuse to believe the evidence of our senses and of our reason. Yet this is what we do when the facts of adaptation and purpose in Nature are admitted as undeniable, and when, nevertheless, their true and obvious character is repudiated on the strength of some absolute knowledge, which is assumed, that the appearance of purpose must be a delusion, because any mind which can possibly be in Nature must of necessity be so totally different from our own that no possible similarity in methods of operation can be conceived as existing at all. Some minds, perhaps many—entangled in this web of sophistical reasoning—half conscious of the inconsistency it involves, and wholly conscious of the helpless confusion

to which it leads—have imagined that the only escape from it is to turn round upon their own reason, and to abandon it as an incompetent weapon in the whole region of religious thought. This, however, is nothing but the old story of the bad workman complaining of his tools. Our tools are good enough if we use them rightly. Our logical faculties cannot be dispensed with in any department of thought, least of all in that which is the highest. But they themselves tell us emphatically that they are like a loom, which is absolutely dependent for the character of its product upon the materials which are supplied to it. If we put shoddy into a loom the web it weaves will be shoddy too. Our logical faculties must have solid data to work upon, facts of objective truth, or general axioms of undoubted and self-evident authority derived from these. But no such character belongs to the abstract conceptions which have been employed to choke off our reason from the legitimate exercise of its powers in the sphere of religious thought.

There is no self-evident truth—there is, on the contrary, self-evident fallacy—in the dogma that the mind which is in Nature must of necessity be so absolutely different from the mind that is in man, that there can be no recognizable relations between them. This dogma does not represent any verifiable fact. Still less does it represent any abstract conception drawn from such facts. It is purely the invention of a corrupt verbal metaphysic. Such meaningless phrases as 'the absolute' or 'the unconditioned' are invented and used

as if they not only had intelligible meaning—which they have not—but as if they expressed some obvious and axiomatic truth. Both parties in the theistic controversy have been guilty of making use of this bad reasoning—those whose notion is that in religion we must believe anything we are told by some external authority, and those, on the other hand, whose notion is that nothing can be believed at all. But our reason, legitimately exercised, rejects both these conclusions as the spurious results of spurious material supplied to our rational apparatus. It is not true that we can know nothing of a thing unless we can know all about it. If this were true it would play havoc as much with science as with religion. There is nothing in the physical sciences of which our knowledge is complete; nothing, indeed, which does not raise many ulterior questions with which our consciousness tells us we are incompetent to deal. And yet all science is founded upon, and assumes, the intelligibility of Nature within the limits of scientific thought. Beyond these limits we know that there are facts and truth in abundance, some, at least, of which perhaps even a very moderate extension of our faculties, or even only of our opportunities, would enable us to apprehend. This is the consideration which, when applied to the corresponding sphere of religious thought, inculcates as the highest wisdom the modesty and the teachableness of a true agnosticism. The absolute and instinctive certainty with which we recognize the work of mind in Nature, assures us with an equal certainty of the reality of the existences with which our religious

conceptions are concerned. It assures us that those faculties have an appropriate subject-matter on which there must be ever more and more to be known, if only it can be reached; whilst at the same time, as regards those faculties themselves, it ought to inspire us with a modest, yet with a confident and a watchful spirit of expectation. The very existence of self-evident truth proves to demonstration that our mind and spirit can have, and actually has, direct knowledge conveyed to it which is of fundamental authority. We cannot say, on any *a priori* grounds, how much further such intuitions may be carried when our mental apparatus is educated and developed by the habitual cultivation of its highest adaptations. But of one thing we may be sure, that all true theology must have its teaching and conceptions continually brought into contact, at a thousand points, with the whole phenomena of Nature, so that congruities and incongruities must be liable to gradual discovery.

The substitution of a genuine for a spurious agnosticism is, indeed, a happy result of recognizing the strict limitations which affect the great self-evident truth which we have been tracing and vindicating as an intuitive element in the minds of all men, even of those who are most eager to hide it out of sight. That self-evident truth has, however, many other functions in the innumerable problems which have been started in the history of religious thought. One of these problems it solves completely—or rather it would be more correct to say, it removes it out of the way—as in reality no problem at all. The supposed problem is the ques-

tion on which men have written so laboriously—what is called the origin of religion. Religion—from the lowest superstition of the lowest savages to the elaborate mythologies of the most cultivated nations of antiquity, which so excited the hatred and indignation of Lucretius—reveals itself to be simply the imaginative and misguided guesswork of the human mind, in the presence, continually felt, of mental or spiritual agencies other than its own. It is simply the result of men's instinctive endeavours to fill up what is felt to be wanting in our knowledge of those agencies, in respect to character, to dispositions, and to will. It is the certainty of their existence and of their power, in abiding contrast with the comparative uncertainty as to all else concerning them, that, taken together, explains at once the universal prevalence, and yet often the incoherent nature, of those conceptions and beliefs which we call religion. There is, therefore, no mystery at all about its origin. It has the same origin as all other human conceptions and beliefs, namely, our instinctive desire to know more about the inner, and invisible, but ultimate, realities of that system of Nature in which we live. In vain do sceptical schools from time to time arise who deny that any such realities exist at all. Such thoughts have been, and always must be, helpless against the universal consciousness of mankind, that mind and will are everywhere within us and around us, and since their seat, and their character, and their rules of action are not known, all such conceptions about them have to be constructed as best they may, out of traditional

beliefs, or out of such new imaginations as have been evolved from them.

The tremendous power of those imaginations cannot be denied. They are still, and ever have been, the one efficient origin and cause of all the most cruel actions and customs which have cursed whole races and generations of mankind. Never did any poet conceive a more pregnant truth than Lucretius when he wrote the famous line—

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.

If we hear of any action or custom more foul or cruel than another among, for example, the negro tribes of Africa, or the savages of the South Sea Islands, we may be quite sure to find that it has arisen from some hideous imagination of what is due to spiritual agencies in order to gain their favour, or to deprecate their wrath. It has been so ever since the world began, and it is so still. On the other hand, the total negation of all belief in any spiritual power, is the parent of a most unrestrained ferocity, and corruption, which has emerged in our own time. All these facts, patent and undeniable in the history of the world, cannot fail to impress us with the special conditions under which our intellectual and moral faculties are placed in dealing with the truths which involve all our relations with the universal mind: whilst, at the same time, they impress us quite as much with the paramount power of all conceptions on the subject, over the conduct and the life of men.

Such a contrast between the supreme importance and effect of this great branch of knowledge, on the

one hand, and the apparent inaccessibility of its facts and principles, on the other hand, is a contrast of which we can never think too much. It cannot shake, even for a moment, our confidence in the self-evident existence which, as we have seen, is so universally impressed upon us; neither can it shake our confidence in the reality of those other relations with that existence, which must prevail, because they are involved in our very conception of it. But it does carry home to us the truth that, for any advance in our knowledge of those relations, the very highest faculties of the mind must be called into action, and must be employed under all the conditions of care and thought, and of systematic work, on which all other branches of knowledge depend.

It would be a great error to suppose that in the physical sciences any more than in religion, we ever do, or ever can escape from the consciousness of limitations on the faculties with which we work—limitations of opportunity, at least, which render it quite impossible for us really to grasp or understand a multitude of conceptions with which, nevertheless, we are made familiar as representing unseen realities of the highest rank. There is not one of those sciences in which we can escape from being confronted not only with questions that are insoluble, but with conceptions that are seen 'as through a glass darkly.' In physics the nature of gravitation lies hid in the deepest mystery. In chemistry the nature of that selective attraction which we call affinity is equally unknown. In light the nature of the medium which

conveys it, involves conceptions which are not only difficult but seem as if they were contradictory. Dr. Thomas Young, in whose truly inspired mind the conception of the ether arose, said of it that we must think of it as permeating all matter as freely as the air passes through a grove of trees. Yet we are also told that we must conceive of it, none the less, as far more rigid than steel, because of the velocity with which it transmits vibrations. We are now daily and nightly handling electricity in many of its forms of energy, yet we are as ignorant of its ultimate nature, and as unable to conceive the causes of its properties, as when Volta first noted the convulsions of a dead frog's legs on an iron balcony in Bologna. And so it is through all the physical sciences. Yet in all of them these prison bars, pressing, as it were, upon our very faces, are compatible with the most absolute certainty of the reality and truthfulness of such measure of knowledge as we have reached. That truthfulness and reality is carried home to us by a thousand corroborations from phenomena which, in some real measure and degree, our knowledge is sufficient to explain, since it often enables us to reproduce them, and still more often to foresee them. Profound as are the differences between every purely physical, and every purely spiritual conception, there is yet this one common property which belongs to all conceptions whether of one kind or another, namely this, that no truth stands alone, solitary, unrelated to other truths in the same region of thought. Every true conception has, and must have, many points of

contact with other truths, which may, or may not, be seen. The consequence of this is, that deep-seated relations between truths which outwardly may seem to be wholly separate, are perpetually coming out and, as it were, betraying themselves in the progress of discovery or of speculation. And in proportion as they emerge into the light of our recognition, they build up a structure of mutual support and corroboration which, more than anything else, gives a sense of certainty to our knowledge. This accords with our experience in all departments of investigation, and it must be especially characteristic of any true conceptions of our relations to that mind which we see and know to be so all-pervading. It is upon that mind that the obvious unity of Nature must depend, and any conception concerning its character, which is true at all, must have its truth continually tested and confirmed by its observed conformity with other conceptions derivable from every part of the system in which we live. A true theology, like a true cosmology, must therefore shine by its own internal light. It cannot be expected, indeed, to solve all mysteries, or to make plain to our very limited understandings, things which may well be inconceivable to us. But, so far as it goes, it ought to be found fitting in with all that we can discover or conceive of the co-ordinated laws which we see prevailing in ourselves and in the world around us.

Chapter V.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE HEBREWS.

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE GODHEAD.

CHRISTIAN theology is founded upon, but expands and glorifies, the older theology of the Jewish Church. No word, or name, which has been used to express the central thought of other religious systems, conveys any adequate conception of the essence of that theology. It is not mere Theism. It is not mere Monotheism. Still less does it partake, in the least degree, of the thought of Pantheism. Mere Theism and mere Monotheism may be, and generally are, bare and bald conceptions of a Being having no known or knowable relations with the world or with man. Pantheism is essentially materialistic, leaving no natural or consistent place for spiritual things. The Jewish conception of the Divine Being, was absolutely different from all of these. He was above all things knowable, not indeed in His ultimate essence, but in all those relations which are familiar to ourselves as constituting Personality. He is indeed the Author of Nature. But Nature was never thought of as constituting Him. He is the Father of our spirits, but He was never identified with their weaknesses or

corruptions. Such independence of will as we are conscious of possessing, this theology does not deny to us, but, on the contrary, asserts and dwells upon as essential to our understanding of Divine things. The God of the Jews was, indeed, the supreme Ruler of the world, and the ultimate triumph of that rule is the perpetual hope and prophecy of the faithful. But He is always represented as encountering, in the meantime, the opposition of rebellious wills. And one of the most striking parts of this theology, is its conception of the nature and methods of the Divine government under these conditions. That conception was essentially the conception of one universal reign of law, so that nothing was, or could be, done except by the use of some appropriate and appointed means. Even the Divine Will itself was conceived as submitting to its own laws, and as, in regard to them, incapable of any 'variableness or shadow of turning.' Without attempting to penetrate into a region which is obviously inaccessible to our powers, namely, the ultimate relation between the Divine Mind and those rules or laws according to which it works, the theology of the Jews did reach and teach this grand conception—that those laws are not only ultimate and immutable, but constitute the very life of Nature, the source of its authority, the one sole cause of all its order and all its beauty, and the one only guide to its purposes and interpretation.

Our familiarity with the books of the Old Testament is very apt to dull our perception of the unique phenomena which in this high matter, they present in

the history of religious thought. So far as the mere incidental forms of their language are concerned, it is largely local, ancestral, tribal, national. The Divine Being is emphatically the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. His worship is in Jerusalem, the capital of a narrow country between the Jordan and the sea. His habitation is on Mount Zion. He is the God who has done great things for the children of Israel as a chosen and a peculiar people. Although this language, when interpreted in the sense which is determined by a thousand contexts, is perfectly consistent with the central idea of the Jewish theology, there is at first sight a seeming contradiction. Yet there can be no doubt as to what that central idea is. It is that Jehovah is not only the God of the whole earth, but of the whole universe of created things. This is the emphatic teaching of the sublime Cosmogony which stands at the opening of the Jewish Scriptures. It stamps as secondary and derivative every later word which dwells on special aspects of the relations between the Almighty and the beings whom He has formed. These special aspects are, indeed, not only consistent with, but they are a necessary consequence of, the dominant idea that Jehovah is not an abstraction but a Person—not a mere symbol of something vaguely designated by such words as Nature, but a Being possessed of that which we know in ourselves as Will—One who works for ever, and works unceasingly, in the maintenance and government of the system which we see.

It is a necessary consequence of that idea that

special aspects of His work, of His character, and of His will, should be impressed upon us in the different phases of our own human life, as well as in different aspects of what we loosely call external Nature. But in the Jewish theology the great principle which connects these aspects with each other is never missed. That principle is the universal reign of laws which we can see and know to be intelligible and righteous. In that theology there is no playing with words which are confessedly 'unthinkable,' but which are nevertheless deliberately coined, and then used, as if they were capable of serving a useful purpose in the cause of knowledge and of rational thought. God is not 'the Unconditioned' nor 'the Absolute,' nor any other inconceivable and irrational contradiction. He is the God of Nature as a whole, and of man in particular as the only one of His creatures, so far as known to us, who is capable of having towards Him the conscious relations of knowledge and of love. It is an essential part of this conception that the Divine Being works always, whether we see it or not, through the employment, as means, of those methods and agencies which are known to us as natural laws. It sets aside with a lofty and supreme contempt the notion that this principle of government implies what are called 'limitations,' and that any such limitations are inconsistent with some pretended knowledge which we have reached by mere thinking, as to the ultimate nature of the Godhead. In this idea the theology of the Jews is strictly scientific in its spirit; that is to say, it takes the system of Nature as it is seen

to be. It sits, as it were, at the feet of fact. It does not pretend to any abstract or *a priori* knowledge of the ultimate nature of things, which is inconsistent with intelligible interpretations of observed phenomena. Instead of starting with the absurd postulate that the mind of man can have no analogy with the Supreme Mind, from which nevertheless it is presumably derived, it accepts the obvious truth that, as a matter of fact, the whole creative and constructive work carried on in Nature exhibits, everywhere, that continual adjustment of means to ends, which is not only perfectly intelligible to us, but is the familiar principle on which alone we can work ourselves.

We have seen how universal and instinctive—although often unconscious—is the recognition by all men of this principle in Nature—how it permeates and inspires even the very structure of human speech. It is in the light of this principle that we can see the perfect consistency with which the language of Jewish theology passes constantly from the largest, to the most local, aspects of the Divine dealings with mankind. It is perfectly true that it is perpetually referring to Him as the God of Israel, and to the children of that ancestor as His chosen people. But it is equally true that it continually explains that choice as having had a reason in the past, and as having a purpose in the future. The reason was the opportunity offered by the existence of an exceptionally faithful and devout mind in one individual man and in his family; whilst the purpose was that through this man and his descendants, an exceptional recog-

nition and knowledge of the true God should become the universal inheritance of mankind. This conception of the purpose and of the reason for the call of Abraham is no afterthought, or mere development of religious consciousness in the theology of the Jews. The announcement of it stands in the forefront of the narrative which enshrines the earliest history and tradition of the race. The promise to Abraham, 'I will make of thee a great nation[1],' does indeed come first; but in its own nature it is a lesser promise than that which follows, 'and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed[2].' There is nothing unintelligible either in the reason given, or in the instrumentality employed, or in the purpose declared, in this explanation of the origin of the Jewish people and of the Jewish Church. But the whole of it does essentially imply, and rest upon, the idea that for the accomplishment of purpose, even the Divine Being operates through what we know as causes, and not by mere arbitrary or capricious exercises of irresistible power.

The selection of one man, and the perpetuation of one family inheriting from him not only special gifts and graces but some definite beliefs, is an adaptation to the highest uses, of many facts that are familiar to us in the secular history of our race. The sudden appearance, even in very corrupt societies, of individual men endowed with an extraordinarily high character, both intellectually and morally, has occurred over and over again in the course of history. Marcus

[1] Gen. xii. 2. [2] Gen. xii. 3.

Aurelius among the Roman emperors, Akbar among the Mogul rulers of India, are well-known examples. Nor is it less important to note that the failure of such men to establish any lasting improvement in the happiness of the world, was due mainly in the first place to the complete detachment or separation of their own personal aspirations from all belief in any definite spiritual facts, and in the second place to bad social and political institutions which could not embody or transmit the good influences due to mere individual character. Tender, touching, and beautiful as were the sentiments of the greater Stoics in classical times, and even sublime as were the conceptions inspired by the pure abstract Monotheism of the Moslem in the mind of Akbar, nothing in the history of religion is more marked than the absolute sterility of both these schools of thought, as influences for good in, and upon, the world. And the simple explanation is that neither of them had any hold on the conception either of definite facts, or of definite laws, as existing and prevailing in the spiritual world. They might almost be compared, in organic Nature, to an elaborate set of muscles and of all the softer tissues, without any points of attachment to a framework of solid bones, or to the strings and pulleys by which the leverage of living activities is worked. The faith of Abraham, however we may suppose it to have come to him, was on the contrary a living and practical belief in the greatest of all realities—the existence of a living and personal God who is the Author of Nature, the Father of men, and who can and does speak to

them in audible voices of direct and positive command. This was a belief which it was indeed worth while to organize in the continuous tenure of an hereditary family—of a growing tribe—and finally of a settled nation, reminded in every stage of its development of the special gift conveyed to it, not for its own sake only, but for the sake of the whole race of man.

It is this conception which glorifies and transfigures all that language of the Old Testament which seems at first sight to be purely local, and to minister to nothing but the pride and vainglory of a small and presumptuous people. This note is struck, as we have seen, at the very beginning of the historical books, and it swells in volume and in the magnificence of its tone, throughout the whole series of the prophets and of the singers of Israel. Considering the fierce passions of pride and of exclusiveness which were undoubtedly connected with the claim and consciousness of the Jews that they and they alone enjoyed the Divine favour—considering the thorough sympathy in at least one aspect of this claim which was felt by their sacred writers—it is remarkable how the abuse and misconception of it was made by them the subject of continual condemnation and rebuke, and how all the fire of their own enthusiasm bursts perpetually out in their visions of a universal Church, of which their own Zion was but the passing symbol. Very often the two strains of language are used in the closest juxtaposition, as not only consistent, but in their minds identical in their significance for the future of

the spiritual life. Among the innumerable passages of the Old Testament which illustrate this, there is perhaps none more typical than the opening verse of the fiftieth Psalm. Nothing, on the one hand, can be more absolute and majestic than the words which express the universality of the call which the Jewish people were commissioned to announce to all nations—'The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.' Nothing, on the other hand, can be more personal and touching than the national and local sentiment expressed for that loved spot on earth—that radiant point—whence this voice was to become most clearly audible to men:—'Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.'

The Jews never thought or spoke of themselves as a nation which had chosen its own God or its own religion. They spoke always of one only God, the one only object of religious thought, who had chosen them as His own nation. He was not conceived as taking the place among them which among other peoples was taken by Bel or Ashtoreth and the other innumerable divinities whose special favour was claimed in return for a special worship. The tribal, and ultimately the national, existence and polity of the Hebrews, was to be in itself wholly founded upon, and constituted only for, a Divine reason and with a Divine purpose; the reason being primarily a special aptitude for the reception of the highest truths in the hereditary character of one great mind and soul. Not because of their numbers, or of any mere military

strength, were they chosen, since even when at the height of their power they were, as compared with other nations round them, and as their own prophets took care to remind them, 'the fewest of all people.' They were chosen solely to enshrine a true belief, a belief in the greatest of all facts, and to save that belief from being lost in a world which had become to the last degree ignorant, brutalized, and rebellious. And the reality and vividness of this belief was kept up not only by a political organization which was peculiar, but also by a long series of special dealings through which the idea of Divine interposition and guidance was burnt in, as it were, into the very blood and marrow of the chosen race.

The employment and adaptation of means to ends for the attainment of purpose, is of the very essence of the whole of this history. And be it remembered that it is a history which in all its main outlines has been established on evidence as continuous and as certain as any other series of events within our knowledge of the past. It is a series of events of which one great physical fact remains the outstanding witness to the present day—namely, the still continued preservation of the Jewish people under conditions which stamp it as a solitary fact in the annals of mankind. That what are called natural causes have been the agency employed there is no reason to doubt, and no occasion to dispute. The sacred writers of the Jews never admitted for a moment that irrational distinction, which is purely modern, between what we choose to call the natural and the supernatural. Between the

physical and the spiritual they did, indeed, constantly distinguish; but they habitually regarded all purely physical forces as servants of the one Supreme and Universal Mind. They were never shy of referring to the use made of them, even in the most apparently miraculous events, however apparently inadequate are the causes sometimes mentioned, when considered in the light of mere physical explanations. Thus, inordinate rains, and, in addition, some great physical catastrophe which is described under the striking formula of 'the breaking up of all the fountains of the great deep,' are the proximate and physical causes assigned by the writer of Genesis to that wide submergence of the land under the waters of the sea which is known to us in the tradition of the Flood[1]. Thus, again, the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea in their flight from Egypt, is still more specifically connected with the employment of a purely physical cause—'And the Lord caused the sea to go back by reason of a strong east wind all that night[2].' Nor in the cases where the Hebrew writers do not mention any physical cause in connexion with the wonders which they relate, is it safe or even reasonable to assume that none such were used. Thus the arrest of a great river in the fullness of its flow, is a greater physical wonder than the temporary retirement of an arm of the sea from its accustomed shores. And yet the passage dry-shod of the Jordan-bed by the Israelites under Joshua, is narrated in the Old Testament without any allusion to any physical

[1] Gen vii. 11. [2] Exod. xiv. 21.

agency whatever to account for an event so strange. Nevertheless it is now known that a similar event, precisely, occurred again in the thirteenth century of our era, at the same place, and is explained by the Arabian historian who records it as having been due to the falling of a great mass of earth and gravel into the bed of the river some miles above the point where its effects were seen.

The story of the Flood has no exclusive connexion with the Hebrew people, except this, that although traditions of some such great catastrophe are, as the French Orientalist, Lenormant, has well established, so widely spread that they may almost be said to be universal, yet it is in the Hebrew literature alone that it assumes a character which even pretends to be historical. The Babylonish account looks very like a corrupted edition of the same story. The modern science of geology has, until very lately, almost assumed its purely mythical character, or, at least, that it represents nothing but the enormous exaggeration of some merely local inundation. And this has been assumed upon the ground that no physical cause is known, or is conceivable, which could have produced the described effects. Gradually, however, in recent years, some geologists, of the highest rank in the science[1], have opened their eyes to see the presence of abundant physical evidence of the fact that amongst the most recent of all the causes which have determined the superficial phenomena of the earth's surface, there must

[1] Notably Sir Joseph Prestwich.

have been, not indeed a universal deluge over the whole globe at any one time, but a transitory submergence of the land beneath the waters of the sea—a submergence, however, so wide in area as to include apparently the whole northern hemisphere down to the latitudes of the Mediterranean. The death in millions of an older fauna, and the mode in which their remains are aggregated, and huddled, and packed, into rents and fissures of the rocks; the distribution also of rolled gravels in some areas, and of quiet muddy sediment in others—these, with the phenomena of glaciation in special districts, leave no doubt in my mind that such a submergence did actually take place, and has been the very latest of all the great agencies of change which have operated on the surface of the globe. The physical causes to which such a movement may have been due, are as yet to us a pure matter of speculation and of inquiry. But they are by no means inconceivable. There are tremendous forces locked up in the bowels of the earth, and we know that our habitual confidence in the stability of the sea level, and of the permanence of its relations to the solid land, is a confidence founded on an infinitesimally short experience. As regards all the longer periods of the earth's history, it is contradicted by innumerable facts. The uniformitarian doctrine, once so confidently taught, has ceased to hold the field. We have learned to discriminate between the permanency or continuity of causes, and any supposed uniformity in their effects. It has come to be admitted that the most sudden and violent

effects may be the result of causes which have been operating with the most perfect continuity for ages without any visible results. Moreover, further reflection has opened our eyes to see that effects which appear to us to be enormous in amount, may in reality be very small and even minute, on the scale on which our globe is made. A submergence to the extent of, say, 2,000 feet would be more than enough to produce all the distinctive effects ascribed to the Deluge, and would nevertheless be absolutely invisible to a spectator stationed at a very small distance in space outside our planet. But the main point to be observed here is that in the Hebrew theology even this catastrophe, with its tremendous effects on living things, is represented as having been brought about by physical causes, and that these again are shadowed forth under forms of language wonderfully adequate to cover and convey the largest conceptions of their possible nature.

And this continues to be characteristic of the language of the Hebrew Scriptures throughout their whole variety and extent. Many indeed of the occurrences and events connected with the original selection and the continuous development of the children of Abraham, which appear to us to be so abnormal as to be either mythical or what are commonly called miraculous, were in reality quite according to the ordinary course of things under the then existing conditions of human society. The idea of one man with his family being suddenly moved to leave his kindred and his country in order to seek

elsewhere a new home wherein he might found a new nation; the idea of such a migration having been determined by some purely religious motive, such as disgust with surrounding wickedness, or the audible call of some Divine voice; the idea of such a family settling in a country as yet unoccupied but fertile, and there multiplying by mere breeding for four centuries until they had grown into a considerable people; the idea of their being not conquered and expelled, but simply enslaved by the native rulers of the country; the idea of their seeking to escape in a body from a land which had become a land of bondage, of their wandering for many years in regions comparatively barren; the idea of a whole nation being carried away captive by a conqueror, being kept separate in captivity, and then suddenly allowed to return to their old land;—all these constitute a series of transactions and events so absolutely different from any of which we have any experience in modern times, that we are very apt to think of it as unreal, and as so contrary to the ordinary course of human events as to be difficult of belief. But when we remember our absolute ignorance of the ages, however many or however few, which must have elapsed between the first introduction of man upon the earth and the very earliest dawn of anything that we can accept as authentic history; when we remember the wonderful facts accomplished during that dark time in connexion with the multiplication, distribution, and dispersion of mankind—facts which meet our eyes when the curtain first rises on the

scene; when, further, we consider the fresh and authentic evidence which the decipherment of ancient inscriptions has lately cast upon primitive times, we must come to the conclusion that all those events and transactions were such as did certainly characterize the genesis and birth of nations in their earlier dealings and fightings with each other. And so the idea becomes familiar to us that natural causes may well have been used first to constitute, and then to localize, in one nation, certain characters of mind and soul, and a certain knowledge of spiritual facts, which were to be of infinite value to the whole world. This, at all events, is the consistent idea which inspires the whole literature and religion of the Hebrews, and which rose to its loftiest expression in the face of the most immanent and the most overwhelming national calamities. In the songs and prophecies of Israel there is a most wonderful combination of those two conceptions which other religions have found it so impossible to combine—an adequate conception, on the one hand, of the power of God, and a profound conviction that His power is always used through the use of appropriate means. It was this that saved their sense of national glory from swelling into pride, and that gives a character of truthfulness and sublimity to their predictions which stands absolutely alone in the history of human thought.

But there is another conception about the method of the Divine action on the world, which is quite as important, and quite as peculiar to the Hebrews, as

their idea of the universal reign of law—and that is the idea of the Divine laws being intelligible to man, and of their being recognizable by him as having a moral character, from their being in themselves just and righteous.

Here again we are apt to miss one of the most striking facts connected with the Hebrew theology from the double sense in which the word 'law' is used. 'The Law,' as is well known, is the technical name given by the Jews to one whole division of their sacred books, that in which we have the account of the promulgation both of the moral and of the ceremonial code, much of which was peculiar to themselves. But this is not the sense in which the Divine law is referred to always, or even principally, in the language of the Old Testament. Just as in the case of the apparent national narrowness and exclusiveness of the Jews, we are apt to forget the purpose of it, so in the particular code of observances laid down for them, we are equally apt to forget that element of universality which it was intended to embody and enshrine. Yet here also, just in the one case as in the other, the distinction is indicated from the beginning, and the moral and universal meaning and value of every form of worship and of ceremonial, is shadowed forth in the simplest and earliest touches of narrative and of allusion. In relating the two very first recorded acts of sacrifice, the Hebrew writer takes care to intimate that there was nothing arbitrary or capricious in the preference shown to one over his brother worshipper, but only the necessary result of

that eternal difference which must always divide between the acts of worship of a faithful and of an unfaithful heart. 'And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door[1].'

This early vindication of the Divine law which determines the acceptableness of all worship in beings who have a moral and responsible nature, is a typical example of the note which sounds more and more loudly as we advance in the developed theology of the Jews. Behind and beneath all the language of the Hebrew Scriptures which refers to the ceremonial or ritual system of the nation, there is always the underlying principle asserted that the whole system of natural laws, whether in the physical or in the spiritual world, is nothing but the supreme expression of a Divine Will which is not only all-powerful but all-righteous. Nothing can be more striking than the persistence with which this conception is carried through in the lofty spirituality of the prophets and of the Psalms. It is true that the symbolism of the Levitical ritual is constantly referred to, but it is not less true that this reference is one of condemnation, and even of disgust, whenever the symbols are regarded only in themselves, or as divorced from the spiritual realities which they were intended to express. So strong indeed is the language used on this subject by the sacred writers of the Hebrews, that it is difficult to reconcile it with even any

[1] Gen. iv. 6, 7.

tolerance of the national forms of worship. Barbarous and impossible as the practice of animal sacrifice seems to us now—horrible and revolting as is the very idea of the altar of God reeking with the blood of victims as an acceptable offering to the Most High—it is a real difficulty to believe or to understand how, or why, forms of worship so gross could ever have formed part of institutions which were Divinely commanded or even Divinely tolerated. Nothing but the comparative innocence and comparative purity of these forms of worship, when contrasted with the hideously cruel and licentious rites of surrounding and kindred nations; nothing but the conception that the guidance of man in religious knowledge has been, somehow of necessity, conducted through steps and stages of instruction—nothing but this can reconcile us to practices of worship which made a slaughter-house of the temple of the living God. It is, therefore, an unspeakable comfort and satisfaction to find that those great thinkers of the Hebrew race, who were undoubtedly the highest interpreters of its theology, attacked animal sacrifice not only as in itself useless when unaccompanied by the spiritual devotion which was of its very essence, but that they attacked in its very principle the fundamental conception on which all external acts of sacrifice were founded, whether those acts were the slaughtering of beasts or the presentation as a gift to God of any other material thing. They represented and exposed the futility of any creature thinking that it could make an acceptable

present to the Creator of anything whatever out of a material world which was all His own:—'I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof[1].' This language goes to the root of the whole conception of sacrifice considered as an offering of anything that comes from the material world. It condemns that conception as obviously carnal, and as involving ideas of the Divine Nature which are not only inadequate, but irrational, and unworthy.

The habit, which is conspicuous in this passage, of appealing to the human reason as a power having the very highest functions to discharge in the sphere of religious belief, is a habit persistent in the great teachers of the Jewish Church. It is inseparably connected with the conviction under which they spoke, that the truths which they proclaimed were facts and not imaginations, that these truths were the expression of natural and necessary laws, and that they are self-luminous in the eyes of men when once those eyes have been opened to the understanding of them. This conviction, and its corresponding language, never fails the prophets or the singers of Israel, and it leads them to the profoundest utterances, not merely in denouncing what was obviously wrong, but in proclaiming what ought to have been obviously true.

[1] Ps. l. 9, 11.

And this is pre-eminently remarkable in their teaching on the dark and difficult subject of sacrifice. The ground of reason on which they denounced the formal, or what may be called the superstitious, view of it, was, as we have seen, the supreme power and ownership of Jehovah over all the creatures of His hands, so that it was irrational, if not blasphemous, to suppose that He could be gratified by external or material gifts.

But the Hebrew writers had firm hold of another fact in Nature, and that is the free will of man. His heart, his affections, and his obedience, were at least sufficiently his own to enable him to give or to withhold them. When these were freely given they were in reality and in truth acceptable to the Most High. This is the universal conception and language of the prophets. In all their denunciations of the outward practices of sacrifice, they never failed to dwell on the counterpart which was indeed genuine and of inestimable value. They always represented this distinction, too, as founded on the nature of things. They never abandoned, indeed, the conception of the power of the Supreme Being even over the wills of men. They speak of the hearts of kings being in His hands and of His turning them wheresoever He will. But they assume the perfect truthfulness of that consciousness of at least a limited and delegated freedom which is universal in man—which is the indispensable condition of all his moral judgements—and which is all that speculative philosophy can reconcile with the phenomena of human life. They see, and feel, and

know as a fact, that this delegated freedom does exist, and constitutes a natural and necessary responsibility in its use. The one thing which man possesses as his own, and the one thing, therefore, which he has it really in his power to give—that one thing when freely rendered to the Creator—is always represented as not only a true, but as the only true sacrifice which he can render. Hosea, one of the earliest of those teachers, heralds it as a universal truth: 'For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings[1].' Amos is still more emphatic: 'Though ye offer Me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. . . . But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream[2].'

This distinction, and contrast, runs through the whole of the prophets. Samuel proclaims it in the most absolute terms: 'Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams[3].' Isaiah enforces it in detail under the form of an exhortation to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, to whose proverbial corruption he thus likens the wickedness of the Jews, in spite of all their sacrifices and other ceremonial observances. He calls upon them 'to listen to the law of our God' as the one essential condition of all true worship, and then bursts out into the indignant question: 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts;

[1] Hos. vi. 6. [2] Amos v. 22, 24. [3] 1 Sam. xv. 22.

and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me[1].' Jeremiah, in the terrible arraignment which he brings against the unrighteousness of life which had come to prevail among the Jews in his time, puts into the sharpest contrast the only true sacrifice which men can give, and even the costliest material offerings which they could offer from their native flocks, or such precious things as they could procure from foreign lands. Moreover this conception so dwells on the mind of the great prophet that he heralds it with a summons to attention which is addressed not to Jews only, but to all nations: 'Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but have rejected it. To what purpose cometh there to Me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto Me[2].'

In these words we have one of those touches of far-reaching penetration into the ultimate nature of things, which are common in the sacred writers of the Hebrews, and which, perhaps, more than anything else, enables us to understand that in which special inspiration consists. For not only does this passage

[1] Isa. i. 11–13. [2] Jer. vi. 18–20.

indicate the law—at once natural, rational, and divine—on which all true sacrifice must depend, but it indicates also the law on which sin depends, and under which the punishments of it are brought about. The evil which was to be brought upon the people is described as 'even the fruit of their own thoughts' in the rejection of ordinances which were recognizable as Divine. So thoroughly had these repeated utterances of the prophets, on the nature of sacrifice, gained acceptance as establishing a fundamental doctrine of the Hebrew theology, that we find another emphatic expression of it among the epigrammatic sayings which, on account of their wisdom, are ascribed to Solomon in the Book of Proverbs: 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the righteous is His delight[1].' But on this doctrine, as on most others, it is in the Psalms that we find Hebrew theology rising to the highest level of spiritual conception: 'Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord[2].' 'Sacrifice and burnt offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart[3].' 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise[4].'

The whole group of ideas which are thus deeply rooted in the theology of the Hebrews, is a group inseparably connected with the doctrine that religion is founded, not on mere sentiment or speculation, but

[1] Prov. xv. 8. [2] Ps. iv. 5. [3] Ps. xl. 6, 8. [4] Ps. li. 17.

on the perception of certain objective truths which are the great realities of the spiritual world. They go deep into the nature and character of the Godhead, into the relations between man and his Creator, and into one, at least, of the most fundamental principles of the Divine government. That government it represents as essentially a reign of law, and the supremacy of a causation which is as natural as the causation seen in organic structures, inasmuch as it can be recognized as worked, and working, in the same great service of an assigned order and of an ultimate purpose.

But there is another element in the Hebrew theology which opens up still further vistas in the same direction, and that is the noble interpretation which it puts on the word law, as expressing the highest object of human knowledge and belief, next to the Personal God whose will it is. The indignant repudiation by the sacred writers of the idea that the shedding of animal blood, or the pretended offering of any material thing whatever, could ever be any atonement for rebellion against the Supreme Will, is a part only, and a small part, of the sublime intimations which escape from them when they speak of the Divine Law. On this subject they rise, as it were, out of the atmosphere of precept altogether. They do not seem even to think of mere commands that have to be obeyed, but rather of some beatific vision of a central radiance which in itself, when really seen, has an absorbing and transforming power over the intellect and the heart of men. Mere submission is not in question, nor mere con-

formity, unless indeed that word be understood as a complete transfiguration. In the material world the absolute changes which are effected through the mysterious laws, or forces, of chemical combination, are perhaps the nearest analogues of those spiritual effects upon the human soul which are ascribed to the absorbing contemplation of the Divine law. No conception short of this can explain or satisfy the language of the prophets, and especially of the Psalms—language which goes so far beyond any possible reference to the life of any one man, even though that man were the chosen king of a chosen people.

In this, as in other matters, literary criticism has done good in redeeming us from too literal an interpretation of the personal and historical circumstances and occasions with which the language of the Psalms has been so often laboriously associated. It is better, and not worse, for us that we have come to understand how certain it is that the language of the Psalms, is the language of a whole Church, and of its theology during many centuries, and not merely the language of one man, or of a few men, however great their figures may have been in their own day. No twisting of personal incidents, however special, can possibly bring down the language of the Psalms upon the great central conception of the Divine law, to the measure of any local, or individual, experience. That language constantly transcends not only all human experience, but all previous human conceptions so far as known to us. Neither the prohibitions of the Decalogue, nor the rigid commands of the

Levitical ritual, can possibly have constituted that law of which the prophets and singers of Israel always speak with the most intense love and longing, as the one only inexhaustible object of highest contemplation alike to the human intellect and to the human heart. It is regarded as the fountain of all knowledge, and as the standard of all righteousness. In their theology a perfect acquaintance with God's law would be the knowledge of all truth, and a perfect love of it would be perfect goodness. It was a subordinate incident in that truth, that to the Jews was intrusted the special unveiling of a significant and important part of it, and this the sacred writers were always proud to remember, and always grateful to record. But it never induced them to forget for a moment that this partial and local revelation was only to be explained as means to a greater end—that the truths proclaimed from Zion were universal truths, and would yet come to be seen as such by all nations.

One of the most glorious visions of Isaiah of the universality of the blessings which would be the ultimate inheritance of the world, is heralded by the words, 'For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem[1].' And this character of universality was not connected, in their minds, with any mere triumph of a conquering race imposing its own religion on a subject world. It was always distinctly and emphatically connected with that quality of absolute righteousness and truth, which was the indelible nature of the Divine law, with a light

[1] Isa. ii. 3.

in it which was self-revealing, and which must at last secure its own spiritual triumph. As expressing this conception, we have the constant use of words which served to identify the law with absolute truth in one or other of its many forms or aspects—in the form of knowledge of objective fact—in the form of perfect righteousness—in the form of absolute justice. Thus Isaiah, again speaking of some Great One who was to represent in His own Person and work the whole mission of the Hebrew people, says, 'He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law[1].' And again, but with special reference to the nature of the law in itself, rather than with reference to its heralds: 'The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law, and make it honourable[2].' 'Hearken unto Me, ye that follow after righteousness, . . . for a law shall proceed from Me, and I will make My judgment to rest for a light of the people[3].'

Not less frequent and emphatic is the language used to express the conception that the law is truth in all its aspects, as well as righteousness and justice in conduct: 'Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in[4].' And all this virtue and excellence in the law, is thought of, and spoken of, as coming from the personal character of a personal God: 'Thou, most upright, dost

[1] Isa. xlii. 3, 4. [2] Isa. xlii. 21. [3] Isa. li. 1, 4.
[4] Isa. xxvi. 2.

weigh the path of the just[1].' It is in the light of this conception that a spirit of personal devotion becomes a natural and necessary consequence: 'Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy name and to the remembrance of Thee. With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early: for when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness[2].' It is, however, in the Psalms again, that we find the most frequent and profound expressions of this spirit of personal adoration of a personal God, who is conceived as constituting in Himself the one only centre alike of all that we can love, and of all that we can desire to know. Nowhere else, even in the Hebrew books, can we find such intense expression given to the conviction that the law of God meant nothing less than the sum of all truth, and the farther conviction that because of this fact it must be the highest object of human knowledge and meditation. 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is Thy ser-

[1] Isa. xxvi. 7. [2] Isa. xxvi. 8, 9.

vant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward[1].'

All the resources of language seem to be exhausted in this catalogue of the essential characteristics of the law of God as embracing every conceivable perfection in every sphere of feeling, of knowledge, and of action. It holds within it more than all the wonder, the admiration, and the intense desire for fuller light which have sometimes animated both ancient philosophers and modern men of science, in contemplating the beauty and order of what they call Nature. But it crowns these purely intellectual perceptions and desires, with the completing and interpreting element of a personal adoration and of a personal love. It is not chargeable with the logical inconsistency of setting up in our minds a sort of spurious Personality in material things, and then of denying the belief in the existence of any real Personality at all. It does not vainly endeavour to attach ethical emotions to purely mechanical conceptions of the causes of all beauty, of all order, and of all adaptations in the universal system under which we live. It sees in that system, both as regards the material and the spiritual world, a vast system of those manifestations of a Mind having close relations with our own minds, which can alone constitute even the intelligibility of it to us, and which still more can alone be any object of our affections or desires.

The whole of the 119th Psalm is one continuous song of adoring recognition of this fact that Jehovah's

[1] Ps. xix. 7–11.

law is the law of all Nature, and especially of man's nature; that it is the pure expression or emanation of His will—a will all perfect, all true, and all righteous. If we could only walk in that law, we should be so pure as to belong to the absolutely 'undefiled[1].' Nor would it be any walk of bondage, but a walk 'at liberty[2].' If only we could really understand that law, it would so reveal the secrets of creation as to make them the engrossing subject of our contemplation; we should 'talk of His wondrous works[3].' If only we loved it and implicitly obeyed it, there would be an end of all the vices that afflict society. It would expel all pride and all covetousness, as well as all untruthfulness in its innumerable forms. Through its precepts all true understanding is acquired, and therefore they who love it 'hate every false way[4].' The law is conceived as the 'statutes,' as the 'testimony,' as the 'judgments,' as the very 'word' of one God, even of the Most High. It is conceived as founded upon, or rather as coincident with, the very nature of things—so that it is both self-revealing and self-enforcing. It will be the ultimate reward, as it is now the comfort and stay, of the righteous, and it will finally be the destruction of the wicked. Its inherent beauty is recognizable by us, and our love and our obedience are due because of this relation between it and faculties of perception which are our own. That love and that obedience are not to be confounded with mere submission to arbitrary authority. They have a reason, and are the natural

[1] Ver. 1. [2] Ver. 45. [3] Ver. 27. [4] Ps. cxix. 104, 128.

consequence of a truth. 'Thy word is very pure: therefore Thy servant loveth it[1].' 'Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is the truth[2].' And yet, notwithstanding this magnificent identification of the supreme law with the whole constitution and course of Nature, there is never in Hebrew theology, the least taint of that confusion of thought which identifies that which we know as mind, and character, and will, with that which we know as matter, or as the physical forces which prevail in it. The laws which govern the stars in their courses, and the laws which govern the condition and the fate of men, are all equally placed in the same category of agencies subordinate to one Almighty Being who is to us a Person. 'All are Thy servants[3]'—such are the comprehensive words in which this idea is expressed.

It is in these fundamental conceptions of the Divine Nature, and of its relation to all other existences, that the theology of the Hebrews stood, and still stands, alone. It is in them that it, alone, offers an adequate object to the religious instincts and affections of man, and it is in them that it, alone, presents an adequate basis for a consistent and satisfying philosophy. It accounts for that universal reign of law which is the goal alike of all physical inquiry, of all mental analysis, and of all sense of ethical obligation. It represents our desire both of spiritual and of physical knowledge, and the very existence of all our speculative faculties, with all their powers

[1] Ver. 140. [2] Ver. 142. [3] Ver. 91.

and functions, as having at once an inherent explanation, and that satisfying justification which consists in reasonable grounds of a confident and expectant hope. In the worship of Jehovah, and in meditation on His law, it is not dreams that we are pursuing—no mere shadowy and purely subjective impressions that we have to deal with—but a whole universe full of fact, and of absolute truth. Our powers and our aspirations have a real, a substantial, and an organic connexion with the whole system which excites them to natural and instinctive action. The knowledge which we desire to possess, is, in greater and greater measure, attainable by the employment of the appropriate means. In the purely intellectual sphere this assurance is expressed in the profound words, 'In Thy light we shall see light'; whilst in the sphere of moral and religious thought it is expressed in words not less simple and majestic: 'O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me[1].'

And yet with all this intense conviction of the absolute reality of the knowable in everything around us and within us, there is in the Hebrew theology no hiding of the fact, that wide regions of that law which we are so encouraged to investigate, are, and must be, inaccessible to us. Many of the most pathetic passages in the prophets and in the Psalms, are devoted to the expression of this fact, and to an outpouring of the emotions arising out of our sense of it as not only always present, but as often painful and oppressive. 'Verily Thou art a God that hidest

[1] Ps. xliii. 3.

Thyself[1],' is the exclamation of Isaiah. 'Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known[2],' is the testimony of the Psalmist in some day of trouble. The difficulty of understanding the prosperity of the wicked, and the licence they often enjoy to persecute the righteous is a special subject of perplexity: 'When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me[3].' There are, however, two striking characteristics to be observed in these and many other passages expressive of the same thought. The first is, that the sense not only of actual ignorance, but of inevitable ignorance, due to the limitation of our faculties, is never allowed to cast the smallest doubt on the certainties which are clearly knowable and are actually known. The second is, that even the difficulties which do really beset us, are always regarded as soluble in the light of revelation, and as incapable of even weakening a reasonable and undoubting faith in the final triumph and vindication of the Divine law. Thus, as regards the first of these characteristics, Isaiah, in the same breath in which he speaks of God as hiding himself, addresses Him nevertheless as the known 'God of Israel,' and as 'the Saviour.' And so, as regards the second characteristic, we find the Psalmist rejoicing that his ignorance was oppressive to him only 'until he went into the sanctuary of God,' for then, and there, he came to understand the ultimate end of wickedness. He even pours contempt on his own previous condition of mind, 'I was even as a beast

[1] Isa. xlv. 15. [2] Ps. lxxvii. 19. [3] Ps. lxxiii. 16.

before Thee.' Moreover, it is to be observed that the sense of ignorance in the Hebrew sacred writers, is due quite as much to their estimate of the overwhelming magnitude and comprehensiveness of that which they understood as God's law, as to any mere consciousness of limitations in themselves. They always longed, and hoped, for greater light, and they always relied on Divine help in attaining to it;—'Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold the wondrous things contained in Thy law.' And then, as if to complete the picture of the wise and reasonable use which these writers made of our sense of ignorance and of limitation, we have in the 131st Psalm the expression of that profound humility which is surely the most rational lesson it ought to impress upon us. 'Lord, my heart is not haughty ... neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me[1].' We know quite enough to carry home to us the conviction that there are certain regions of fact, and consequently of speculation, in which any satisfying knowledge is wholly unattainable to us. It seems as if they are covered, as it were, by an atmosphere in which we have no wings to rise. And we must know, too, that these regions are not far away, but, on the contrary, so close to us in all things—that they seem not only to touch us, but to press, as it were, on our very faces, at every point in the whole circumference of our knowledge.

By nothing is this omnipresence of the unknown made more conspicuous than by that very advance of

[1] Ps. cxxxi. 1.

the physical sciences of which we are tempted to boast so much. All our discoveries in these lie, as it were, in one plane, above which there lie other planes that are too high for us, because to them we have no ladders of ascent. The word is a bad one that is commonly applied by philosophers to describe the comparatively low level above which this plane never rises. They say that we can only know what they call 'phenomena,' a Greek word which denotes only things that do appear. But it is not true that our knowledge, even in the purely physical sciences, is limited to things which are 'apparent' only to any bodily sense, or to all the bodily senses put together. No man has seen, or touched, or heard, the laws of motion, or the law of gravitation, or the law of chemical affinity, or many other of those abstract conceptions which are called laws, and have been reached, and are securely held, by faculties of a purely intellectual kind. Not one of these conceptions belongs, accurately speaking, to the class of phenomena. They are the causes of phenomena, but it is a blunder to confuse them with their visible effects. When we see the daily tides we see millions and millions of tons of water moved by a force which is not only invisible, but is in its own nature, and even in its method of operation, utterly unknown, and is perhaps inconceivable to us. All that we know about it is that its work has an ascertained numerical relation to mass, or quantity in matter, and to distance in space. But these relations are not phenomenal. They are not apparent; they do not appear. They are purely

intellectual conceptions, reached by purely intellectual powers, whose function it is to correlate, to compare and to analyze mere phenomena, and to find out invisible laws to which these phenomena are subordinate. It is important to grasp this distinction firmly, because nothing is more important than to define to ourselves, as best we can, the true nature of the limitations which do really beset us. What we cannot reach is the ultimate nature or origin of anything whatever. We can, and we do, continually reach causation, which is perfectly real and true, but is never ultimate. And this we can feel and see to be a limitation which is insuperable. We may hope and expect to discover much in the physical sciences which is now involved in apparently impenetrable mystery. It is, for example, quite within the range of possibility that we may discover the physical causes of what we call gravitation. But if we do, that discovery will still be on the same plane with all previous discoveries on the correlations of the physical forces. What these forces are in themselves, and how these forces have come to be so correlated, are questions on which the physical sciences have cast no light whatever.

There are some cases, indeed, and one in particular, in which the discovery of physical causes has cast an important light on at least one source of ignorance, and of conceptual infirmity in ourselves. Our fathers found it impossible to conceive an antipodes, not because they had any difficulty whatever in conceiving a great ball or globe, with surfaces looking

in various and opposite directions, but only because they could not conceive the existence of men, or of other creatures, standing and living on that ball with their heads 'downwards.' But this difficulty lay entirely in their ignorance of that in which downwardness and upwardness consists. If they had known that these words have no meaning at all except as expressing directions consonant with, or opposed to, an attractive force which we now call gravitation, they would have had no more difficulty than we have in conceiving an antipodes. And this case may give us an important hint on one, at least, of the causes which constitute what we call inconceivability. That cause is simply the weakness and the ambiguity of words. It is just as inconceivable to us now, as it was to our ancestors formerly, that a world of living things should exist with everything topsy-turvy. The whole difficulty lay in not knowing the purely relative and contingent sense in which such words as 'downwards' and 'upwards' have any meaning at all. And this kind of ignorance, or of thoughtlessness, may be now affecting our conceptual faculties to a very large extent, not only in physical, but in spiritual, matters. It may be out of this source of confusion and bewilderment that many of our difficulties arise. It is, indeed, impossible to doubt that it must be so with, for example, that darkest problem of all, the origin of evil, and our difficulty of reconciling it with the Divine omnipotence and the Divine goodness. Thus, again, in all our conceptions involving time, such as those concerning Divine foreknowledge and decrees,

or those concerning the possibility of true predictive prophecy as a gift to men, or those concerning the ultimate nature of what we call causation, and in many others, it is possible, and even certain, that we are often like children talking nonsense, because they do not know the narrow meaning of the words they use, nor more than a fraction of the facts to which they relate.

This is an idea which, when we grasp it, makes it not only possible, but easy, to combine the most absolute humility of mind and teachability of spirit, with the firmest confidence in the trustworthiness of our faculties when they are properly informed. The theology of the Hebrews is full of this feeling and idea. It absolutely identifies knowledge with all the virtues of conduct, and all the graces of spiritual life. Everything with them that is good, and everything that is true, rests, in their conception, upon realities and facts, not on mere sentiments or abstractions. Its sacred writers repeat this idea over and over again in every variety of form. Perfect knowledge would be inseparable from perfect conformity with a perfect law, which again is nothing but the authority and expression of a perfect will. Even the highest of all conceivable spiritual operations, namely, the overcoming and conversion of rebellious wills, is identified by Isaiah with the working and the effects of knowledge: 'By his knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many[1].' And so, throughout the Prophets and the Psalms, we have the same profound combination of an abiding sense

[1] Isa. liii. 11.

of ignorance and of limitation, coupled with an absolute confidence in the truthfulness of the knowable and the known. On the first of these, the sense of ignorance, rested a deep and a most rational humility. On the second of these—our confidence in known truth—rested a most triumphant faith. The cry that 'clouds and darkness are round about Him' did not even for a moment shake their serene belief that nevertheless 'justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne.'

This confident belief concerning the Unseen was firmly rooted in the perception of correlated truths which we can, and do, plainly see. That one only living and true God, whose will and character were reflected in the beauty and order of the world, and most of all in spiritually minded men, is seen, in the light of this belief, as the Author of that highest of all adaptations or adjustments, which consists in the power we possess to see and recognize necessary truth. The power of seeing certain concepts to be self-evidently true, cannot be the product of our own conscious reason, because conscious reason must, and always does, assume it before a single step can be taken in any reasoning process. It is a power born with us as part of our organization, and is essentially, therefore, in the nature of inspiration. That is to say, it is part of the creative work done in us, and for us, and then handed over to us for use. It establishes the closest of all possible relations between our minds and the mind of the Creator. It is inspiration in its own measure and degree, and it must obviously be, in its

very nature, capable of indefinite extension at His will and under His conditions. It is He that giveth understanding in the least, as well as in the highest, degrees.

A well-known modern thinker, who was deeply impressed by the phenomena presented in the Hebrew Prophets, asked himself with wonder the question from what possible source they could have derived in a rude age, and in a half-barbarous people, their splendid, and their obvious, spiritual insight. One of those prophets himself answers this question in the only way in which it can be answered; that is to say, the only way in which it can be explained according to natural laws. 'The Lord,' says Amos, 'revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets[1].' The prophets never think of themselves as gifted with any mere poetic or imaginative faculty, or as preaching sentiments which are detachable from facts. What they do claim is nothing more than lifted eyelids, and a seeing of that which was invisible to minds that are either idle, or corrupt, or both. Hence, too, they represent the sins and vices which they denounced in their own people, as due to sheer blindness. 'And the vision of all,' says Isaiah, 'is become unto you as a word of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed[2].' The national sins of the Hebrew people are always conceived and described as a rebellion against the whole order of Nature, and as therefore certain to

[1] Amos iii. 7. [2] Isa. xxix. 11.

entail retribution and calamity. No more forcible expression of this idea can be conceived than the words of the same prophet, 'Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay[1].' The gift of the prophets was an 'open vision' of facts which were secrets only to those that 'erred in spirit,' although these also could 'come to understanding.' For, when proclaimed, those secrets can be recognized as truth by all who exercise their faculties with an open heart and an honest discrimination.

This is a most rational belief. It assumes and rests upon that continuity and consistency between facts which are familiarly known, and other facts which lie beyond them, on which all progress in knowledge depends, and in which, indeed, all knowledge may be said essentially to consist. It is a system of teaching and belief which affords ample room for all that is really justifiable and true in what is now called Agnosticism. Both the sense of actual ignorance and the consciousness of inherent limitation, are fully realized, and often even painfully expressed. But, on the other hand, it is never allowed to paralyze or confuse the great certainties which can be, and are actually reached, nor to shake our conviction that inseparable harmonies must and do link these certainties with all that we desire to know. Philosophy, as that term is generally applied, is not religion, and many systems of what is called philosophy have been consciously and intentionally antagonistic to the fundamental conceptions on which religion, and even

[1] Isa. xxix. 16.

morality, depend. But, on the other hand, it is obvious that any true theology must be also a philosophy in proportion to its recognition of the highest and most universal facts in Nature. And in this connexion it is most instructive to observe how the theology of the Hebrews solves and reconciles many of the mere intellectual antagonisms of the schools. In its immense richness of conception, in its wide grasp and fulness, it takes into due account all the bits and fragments of truth which have given whatever strength they had to captivate different thinkers in different ages of the world. The passionate admiration for Nature which colours and warms the poetry of Lucretius and the tenets of the Epicurean philosophy, is fully accounted for, and largely even justified. The sublime intuitions which inspired the Platonic school are seen in their true aspect as flashes of a genuine internal light. The sad but beautiful sentiments of the Stoics, are largely adopted, purified, sanctified, and confirmed. The two great by-paths of thought which have never ceased to divide speculative thought, the materialistic and the spiritualistic, have each their proper place assigned to them. Even the wearisome wranglers, who in the Middle Ages kept up the fight between Nominalism and Realism—even those disputants are seen to have had, each of them, little fragments, as it were, of true flesh and bone to tear. That great procession of thinkers in modern times, who have walked head and shoulders above lesser men in the slippery path of metaphysical analysis—Descartes, Locke, Hume, Berkeley, and Kant—all these are seen

to have been minds which had a firm grasp of some special aspects of the truth—aspects which are all comprehended, or are all comprehensible, within the wide area of the theology of the Hebrews.

If the great progress of the purely physical sciences in recent times has roused again some of the most materialistic and deceptive interpretations of pagan thought, and has allied itself in some minds with speculations which are unmistakably the same, and are as old as the wanderings of Greek philosophy, we have, on the other hand, the striking and reassuring fact that many of the very foremost men in the field of modern scientific discovery, see no reason to think that, in that field, anything has become known that turns into darkness the Light that has gone forth from Zion. For the most part, their latest discoveries have been as irrelevant as other physical facts and laws with which we have been long familiar. But there are a thousand rays streaming from their pursuits, which are in perfect harmony with the theology of the Hebrews. The very first intuitive conviction which animates all their investigations, and excites all their enthusiasm, is the conviction of the intelligibility of Nature. And this is nothing less than a conviction of some inherent and pre-established correspondence between our own minds and the Mind which, in Nature, is ubiquitous and supreme. The idea of a universal reign of law is the most familiar of all ideas to them, whilst yet in the devising and conduct of their own experiments they must see and feel that it is the constancy of

physical laws that alone makes them such pliant agents and instruments of purpose. They know that the same principle alone can explain the innumerable mechanical and chemical apparatuses in the organic world. They know that they themselves never fail to resort to language full of this principle, when they have to describe and to explain its facts. On the other hand, no class of men can be so constantly impressed by the sense both of ignorance and of limitation, as the investigators of the physical sciences. There is not one of the elementary forces, which they so constantly both handle and subordinate, that does not present to them problems which are insoluble. Thus the close proximity of the known and of the unknown, must be, to them, one of the most familiar of all conceptions. Nor does it ever occur to them to doubt the truth and certainty of such knowledge as they can and do reach, because of the farther mysteries which surround it and with which it is inseparably connected. They have an intimate conviction, which is ever present in their minds, although it may be largely unconscious, and wholly unexpressed, that what lies beyond the range of actual or even of possible discovery, will be in perfect harmony with the conceptions which result from accurate observation and sound reasoning within that range.

Above all, when the devotees of physical science come face to face with psychology as an inseparable part of biology—that is to say, when they deal with the structure and functions of living organisms—when in themselves, as a part of Nature, they gaze into what

has been well called 'the abysmal depths' of their own personality, and of its action on external things, they must see and feel that our own minds and wills can be most rationally conceived as a type and model of other agencies, which are not only higher but supreme. And this conception, under modifications dictated by other facts yet to be noticed here, may well condemn as a delusion those objections to what is called 'Anthropomorphism,' which are often referred to as if they were insuperable. Anthropopsychic is the proper word for the conception, not anthropomorphic. It is not the form of man, but the spirit and the mind of man, that casts light upon the constitution of the universe. It is in the correlations of that mind and spirit with the whole constitution of things, that the intelligibility of Nature consists. The language which we have traced in the descriptions of physical science, is a perpetual witness not only to the possibility of entertaining this conception, but to the practical impossibility of entertaining any other, or of explaining anything without it—either to ourselves or others. And this is the very conception which is fundamental in the theology of the Hebrews. It is easily distinguishable from those references to the mere bodily form of man, which are avowedly metaphorical when applied to the Divine Being, and are indeed to a large extent metaphorical even when applied to ourselves. When we speak of the 'work of our hands,' we do not mean the mere mechanical effects of bones and sinews, of what physiologists call the 'manus,' an organ which is made on one model

throughout a large part of the whole living world from the lowest fish up to man. What we mean by hands, when spoken of in this sense, is the directing agency of the mind, which both determines the work to be done, and guides the muscles and tendons of the hand in the doing of it. And this is the manifest interpretation to be put on what is called the anthropomorphic language and conceptions of the sacred writers. Sometimes the habit they had of repeating one idea in two or more forms, exhibits very distinctly this use of imagery. Thus in the eighth Psalm, where the writer indicates most clearly a sense of the vastness of the heavens, and of the number of the bodies that move in them, which immeasurably transcends any mere astronomical knowledge of the Hebrews, he speaks of them as 'the work of Thy fingers' and, alternatively, of them as things which 'Thou hast ordained.'

In this lies the full explanation of all other language of the same kind. There is no pride and no presumption in the imagery which in their writings takes our own acts and thoughts as types of the Divine. There is no reason and no true humility in assuming this relation to be incredible. The most absolute confidence in the truthfulness of the indications given to us by Nature, is perfectly consistent with the most profound sense of the ultimate mysteries they involve. True humility lies in the longing for more knowledge, but not in undervaluing that which has been attained—in shutting our eyes to its great significance—or, least of all, in disparaging those

faculties which have such manifold relations to the objects of our desire. Surely all the facts of the case, and the most reasonable construction to put upon them—the one hope of science not less than of philosophy and religion—is expressed in the profound exclamation of the Psalmist, 'In Thy light we shall see light.' And this hope implies the conscious possession of adapted organs of understanding and of vision. Nor is it less according to the constitution and course of Nature, that a longing for greater knowledge should be in itself a qualification, and even a condition, for the attainment of it, both in the sphere of morals and of intellect. Suggestions, in many forms, do often come to those who look hard for truth with an open mind. And this important law, which stands alike to reason and to experience, is perpetually referred to in the theology of the Hebrews, notably in that wonderful image in Psalm 97, 'Light is sown for the righteous[1].'

[1] Ver. 11.

Chapter VI.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE HEBREWS.

ON THE NATURE OF MAN.

The conception of Jehovah as the universal God, as the Creator of all things, as He whose will constitutes what we call the Laws of Nature, as a Being whom we must think of as a Person who acts and speaks and rules as a Living God—whose Law is the Truth—whose Government is perfect righteousness—this is undoubtedly the very essence of the theology of the Hebrews. This was the one far-reaching conception which it was the special function of the Jewish nation to preserve in a world where no such conception had survived. But there was in that theology another conception not less peculiar. It concerned the special relations of man to that one Creator. A true idea of the character of the Godhead, must be at the very root of all religion. But a true idea of the nature of Humanity, must be not less essential, if indeed it may not rather be regarded as an inseparable part of the same idea. Accordingly, in the Hebrew theology, teaching of the most peculiar and definite kind is laid down on this subject. Man, it declares, on the one

hand, was created 'in the image of God,' and 'after His likeness[1].' But that image and likeness, it declares not less emphatically, on the other hand, has been since much defaced, although not irretrievably destroyed. The first of these two propositions, besides being specifically asserted in its account of Creation, is constantly and consistently maintained and presupposed in all its appeals to the moral and intellectual faculties of man as capable of seeing Divine truths—of appreciating the Divine law—and of loving Him who is the Author of it. These inborn capacities are uniformly assumed not only as parts of his original organic constitution, but as parts of it which are indestructible. They are a fact in Nature. God is the rock out of which man was hewn[2]. And this is asserted not only of His chosen people, but of the universal family of mankind. He not only 'looketh on all the inhabitants of the earth,' but, 'He fashioneth their hearts alike[3].' The unity of the human species is uniformly asserted, or assumed, throughout the sacred writings, and the Divine gifts which belong to it are represented as the common inheritance of the race. It may be said with truth that 'theopsychism' attributed to man, is the real explanation of what is called the anthropomorphism attributed in the Hebrew scriptures to the mind and will of God. The laws of mind governing human action, were in a measure applied to the Divine will, only because those laws were conceived to be the representatives or expressions of a Divine original.

[1] Gen. i. 26, 27. [2] Isa. li. 1. [3] Ps. xxxiii. 15.

And in this respect the whole human family was always spoken of as one. However difficult it may sometimes be, even for us, to think of all the widely separated races of the globe as belonging to one species, the sacred writers never doubted it. They always asserted the universal brotherhood of man as the correlative of their assertion of the universal fatherhood of Jehovah; and this is only one example of the light which a true theology casts, and must cast, indirectly on problems which are often claimed as the exclusive property of the physical sciences. Our own wider knowledge of the geographical distribution of man over the most widely separated regions of the globe, has increased the difficulties which this doctrine involves, even although it be true that, after all, only additional evidence in its favour has been the final result of scientific investigation. Charles Darwin has recorded the wonder with which he saw how easily, and how soon, even a typical savage of the lowest grade from Tierra del Fuego, became acclimatized with, and assimilated to, the mental atmosphere of civilized Europeans. Their minds and hearts, however widely sundered in habits and in manners, in knowledge and in conditions of faculty, were nevertheless evidently 'fashioned alike' in all the fundamental characteristics of potential powers. The space—wide and almost immeasurable, as it may seem—which separated Charles Darwin from the savage who played and laughed with English sailors in the forecastle of the *Beagle*, was after all only a space evidently arising out of circumstance and opportunity.

The abstracting and speculating intellect which in Darwin was so deeply exercised in fathoming, if it were possible, the secret origin of organic life, was, after all, the same instrument of thought and of aspiration, which had always enabled the savage Fuegian to form some few abstract ideas, and was then enabling him daily to take in a few more, such as could never be taught to beasts. That intellect, poor and undeveloped as it was, led him constantly to exhibit, in new applications, the universal human emotions of wonder, of curiosity, and of a desire to know.

These are the identities in quality and in kind of mental structure, which, like the corresponding identities in physical structure of the body, establish the universal brotherhood of man, in spite of the widest differences of functional exercise or activity. These, too, are the identities which establish man's place in Nature, and demonstrate those close and intimate relations between his mind and the Mind that is intelligible there, which, in spite of still vaster differences, reveal how high that place is, and how indefinitely higher it may come to be. The prophets and singers of Israel in all their denunciations of the worse than brutality and wickedness of the surrounding nations, never forgot that higher aspect of humanity which thus links man with the Divine. They never for a moment abandoned to doubt, far less to despair, that account of him which had been handed down to them, that, in a most true and real sense, man had been made in the likeness and image of his Creator. On this

doctrine were founded all their denunciations of sin, all their exhortations to virtue, all their appeals to reason, and all their prophetic hopes of a more and more perfect knowledge.

But deeply as this doctrine was imbedded in the theology of the Hebrews it was accompanied and qualified by another doctrine concerning the nature of man, which was not less constantly enforced. That other doctrine was that in man the Creator's image had come to be so terribly defaced that the restoration of its truthfulness and beauty, can only be attained by the use of appointed means, and is always a work of watchful and laborious effort. This doctrine of the corruption of man's nature, like its correlative doctrine of his splendid powers, is nothing but a recognition of indisputable facts. We are so accustomed to think of it as a theological, or religious, dogma, that we fail to note its coincidence with all observation and experience. The universal law which otherwise prevails in Nature, is that every living creature has instincts fully corresponding to its structure, and guiding it in the due discharge of its inherited functions. In man alone this perfect co-ordination fails. Or rather, it would be more correct to say that in man alone it is crossed, checked, and to a terrible extent actually reversed, by another tendency — the tendency, namely, to misuse all his powers, and to turn all the natural instincts of his mind, and the natural functions of his body, into sources of misery and destruction to himself and others. Familiarity with this fact has dulled our

sense of the wonder of it and of its absolutely exceptional character in the universal order. And so far has this blindness gone that by many philosophers it has been accepted as so much according to the constitution and course of Nature, that they reject as incredible any idea that it can ever have been otherwise with man. They are specially hostile to the idea that when he first appeared upon the scene, he can possibly have been born in a condition more nearly like the condition of all other creatures—which is always a state of congenital harmony between their endowments and the use they make of them. These philosophers have got what they call 'evolution' on the brain, and they think that it can only work mechanically and in one direction—that of raising and elevating the subject on which it works. The fact does not seem to occur to them that it must work in all directions, and that seeds of evil, as well as seeds of good, bring forth some thirty, some sixty, some an hundredfold. They will have it that the first man must have been at least as low, or far lower than the lowest savage now is, not only in respect to knowledge, but in respect to character and habits. He must, from the first, have done, to his own damage and to the damage of his descendants, things which no beast is so savage or so stupid as to do.

The sacred writers of the Hebrews did not believe this original and congenital corruption either as a necessity or as a fact. They believed and taught that man was created, as all other living things have undoubtedly been created, in possession of

gifts which were all in harmony with each other, and with surrounding conditions. Yet as one of these gifts, at least in measure and degree, was peculiar to man, namely, the range of freedom in his will, corresponding with the range and quality of his conceptual faculties, they saw that as sin could not be committed by the beasts, so neither could virtue exist in man, if he were as mechanically saved from disobedience and from vice. Thus the higher original rank connected with free will, involved of necessity the possibility of lapse. Accordingly, what they believed and taught, was that such a lapse had actually taken place. They thus accounted for the obvious and innumerable facts which proclaim the perverse blindness and wickedness of men, and the violent contrast presented by them alone between their splendid gifts and the actual results which were only too manifest in the world. They noted, too, as specially instructive, the significant fact that many of the most hideous and destructive practices among surrounding nations, were directly due to false notions, and foul imaginations, concerning the Divine Nature. If they had known as much as we do of the most distant races of the world they would have known that this is not an accidental, but a universal, truth. Looking, as they always did, for the explanation of every fact in the self-enforcing consequences of one supreme law, they would have seen, in this discovery, only another illustration of the doctrine they so firmly held, that as the worst evils of humanity do now actually come from superstitions

and false theologies, so all hope of recovery and of good, can only come from a theology which is true.

The form into which they threw the narrative of the Fall, like the form into which they threw the narrative of the Creation, is full of allegory. As no human writer could have been present at the one operation, so none is even supposed to have left any record of the other. Certain great general ideas on the essential nature of both events, are conveyed in a series of vivid and impressive images. In the case of Creation those images conveyed the special idea that the result was attained through stages of time, and in ascending steps of work. The introduction of man was expressly represented as the last step of all. He alone is said to have been made in the image of God, although in all the mere physical structures requisite for the embodiment of organic life, the bodily frame of men and of the beasts, is so obviously made on a common plan. This identifies the conception of the Hebrew writers in respect to man's special Divine relationship, as referring exclusively to those gifts of mind and spirit in which we see, as a fact, that he does actually stand aloft, and alone, among organic beings. In conveying these leading ideas, allegorical expressions are largely used, as indeed they are constantly used in the everyday language of life. The whole structure of human speech is full of allegory. It assumes, however, of necessity a more prominent form in dealing with conceptions which lie beyond the range of actual observation and of personal experience. The Spirit of God 'moving on

the face of the waters,' and the execution of the Divine purposes in the mere pronouncement of certain spoken words, these are transparent allegories. In like manner, but of necessity to an extent still more elaborate, the account given of man's first disobedience, is allegorical in all details. 'The tree of the knowledge of good and evil' is a powerful but an obvious metaphor, to express the relation between a free and a responsible will, and that sense of obligation which is conscious at the same time of the possibility of disobedience. The representation of an evil spirit under the form of a serpent, and of evil suggestions as coming through its spoken voice; the image of the Creator 'walking in the garden in the cool of the day;' of His missing Adam hidden among the trees; the colloquy between the Lawgiver and the violator of the Divine command; the expulsion from a terrestrial paradise; the angels with flaming swords to prevent return—all these are indeed splendid and telling images, but they are images none the less. And there is one remarkable feature in what they tell us which is in perfect harmony with a similar feature in the story of the Creation. In that story it is obvious that immense blanks are left. Nothing but the most general outline is given. And yet what is given has been so expressed and conceived as wonderfully to avoid any clashing with the later fillings up of subsequent scientific discovery. The narrative, in its first and simplest form [1], does not enter into any of the

[1] Gen. i. What is here said of this first account in Genesis cannot be said with equal confidence of the second, or alternative account,

childish or grotesque inventions of which all other cosmogonies are full. It does not commit itself to any explanations as to time and methods, which may, or may not, be accessible to later investigation. In like manner it is remarkable that the story of the Fall does not involve the widespread but fond imagination of some golden age, neither does it imply any kind or degree of acquired primeval knowledge. On the contrary, it asserts that it was the very first creature endowed with a free will that used it in the spirit of disobedience, so that the processes of corruption must have begun at once. No facts establishing the universal savagery of mankind in all later generations, even if such facts could be clearly ascertained, can involve of necessity any contradiction of the doctrine laid down by the Hebrew writers that all such degrees of vice and savagery are due to original, and continuous, and increasing, violations of the Divine law.

It is impossible to deny that in this doctrine we have a rational and consistent explanation of the strangely contrasted facts which are obvious and notorious in the condition of humanity: on the one hand, the elevation of its powers, so far above those of all other living creatures; on the other hand, the failure of its instincts to keep man from vices which lower him far below the level of the beasts. Every aspect of the facts, as we actually see them in the

which follows in Gen. ii. The differences between these two accounts have been exaggerated. But the detail entered into respecting the separate creation of woman, as well as some others, seem obviously mythical (Gen. ii. 21, 22).

world, is thus comprehended within the large philosophy of this Hebrew doctrine. There can be no doubt that, by a natural law, evil does propagate and intensify itself. Nor can there be any doubt that the most fruitful of all evils is false and corrupt imaginations as to the character and demands of the Supreme Being. It is well worthy of note that, so far as we know, the writers of the Old Testament were never brought into contact with any of the races to which we usually apply the name of savages. No allusion is made by any of them to men in that condition. They never saw such representatives of humanity as the natives of Australia or of Fuegia. If they had seen them they would certainly not have recognized them as the nearest types of the condition in which man can have been born into the world, any more than they did recognize in the same capacity any of the cruel and ferocious nations with a high civilization by whom they were surrounded. Their conception of the state and condition of the first man was evidently that of a child in knowledge and acquirements, but of a child, also, in simplicity and innocence. And this conception undoubtedly corresponds more closely than any other to the analogies of Nature. It is a conception which simply assumes that man's first condition was like that of all other living things, the condition of a perfect natural harmony and adaptation between his interests and his powers as an inheritor of organic life. And if this conception does not explain what we call the origin of evil, at least it does give a profound definition of its essence in defining

the real nature of that which is its opposite, namely, all goodness and virtue. The obedience of a will really free, and conscious of obligation to the laws of a living God who is the God of all flesh, and the Father of all spirits—this, they taught, was the only righteousness, and the only true object of moral approbation. But that very freedom on which the whole depends, is, to us, as inseparable in thought from the possibility of, and from temptations to, disobedience, as the existence of light is inseparable from the phenomena of shadows, and from the possibility of utter darkness.

With this great clue to the contrasts and enigmas of human character and conduct, the prophets and singers of Israel could look in the face all the facts of life. With perfect truth and with perfect consistency they could say, 'Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of Thy hand,' and yet they could also say, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' Nor is it less evident that this doctrine, besides being consistent with reasonable conclusions as to the past, and with all the evidence of the present, is the only doctrine on which any hope for the future can be founded. It asserts for man an inborn capacity for the recognition of truth—if only it can be presented to him. It asserts the abiding presence of the same spiritual agency from which that capacity has been originally derived. It assumes the possibility of personal communion with that Spirit through a rational

confidence in the Unseen which rises into faith. It asserts that as the result of such communion with many chosen servants of Jehovah during a long course of history, the Divine law has been largely made known to men. It asserts that the goodness and beauty of that law is self-revealing to those who meditate upon it, and that the devout contemplation of it has a transforming power over the minds and hearts of men.

No part of the teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures rests more evidently on a natural law than this. Even as between man and man, nothing can be more certain than the powerful influence of one spirit upon another. The contagion of example is notorious and proverbial. The purifying and elevating influence of a great character rises in proportion to its own greatness and to the study, the love, and the admiration, with which we regard it. It is therefore all according to the constitution and course of Nature that the admiring and loving contemplation of a Divine Being, vividly believed in as the Author of all truth, should be the only possible regenerating power in the restoration of a corrupted world. So also is it in entire accordance with the nature of things that such a Being should respond to His creatures' adoration by favouring manifestations of His character and of His spiritual presence. There are no natural laws more certain in their operation than those which pertain to the working of a mind willing and acting under the highest motives conceivable to man. Accordingly the possibility of a close personal communion

with Jehovah is an inseparable part of the Hebrew theology. 'Speak, for Thy servant heareth[1]' were the words of the prophet Samuel. 'Show Thy marvellous loving-kindness, O Thou that savest by Thy right hand them that put their trust in Thee[2],' are the words of the Psalmist. Nor does he, or other sacred writers, forget the correlative truth, that such communion does and must transform and glorify the man who thus adores and prays—'As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness[3].'

There is another aspect of the same series of connected truths, which plays a large part in the theology of the Hebrews. The special elevation and illumination which was attributed, as a natural consequence, to such communion with the Mind of God, was conceived to carry with it a high and far-reaching power of interpretation over social phenomena, and over coming political events. This was, indeed, the constant theme of prophecy, and the constant exercise of its functions. It is strange that this conception seems to be hard of acceptance now. It is specially strange that the difficulty of it seems greatest to those who dwell most on the reign of what they call 'invariable laws.' The 'abstract predictability' of all events is one of the most plausible of the phrases in which the central idea of the Necessitarian philosophy has been expressed. It seems impossible for any of us to get rid of that idea altogether. We must think that

[1] 1 Sam. iii. 10. [2] Ps. xvii. 7. [3] Ps. xvii. 15.

whatever happens has happened because of a concatenation of causes, the links of which could have been traced by perfect knowledge. Fatalism in its grossest forms has always been founded on this phase of thought. It often finds expression even in the popular mind, among men who do not think themselves fatalists, and who have never dabbled in philosophy. But the abstract predictability of events makes concrete, or occasional, predictability, at least more natural and more easy to conceive as possible. If we believe that the whole course of Nature is governed by law—by the apparently self-working operation of both physical and spiritual causes—it must be possible that a glance of unusual spiritual penetration into the present, should be able, with various degrees of certainty, to predict the future. The extent of this power, the sweep and distance of the predictive vision, must depend on the nature of the subject, and on the rank and power of the special laws on which each particular vision rests.

It is in direct connexion with the unreasonable and unphilosophical preconception against the possibility of prediction, that great efforts have been made to eliminate from Hebrew prophecy the purely predictive element, and to reduce the whole of it to mere preaching. For this purpose elaborate arguments have been used to bring down the date of the prophetic writings to a comparatively late period, so that mere seeing, and not any foreseeing, may be made the explanation of their language. But in so far as this effort has been

really successful and has rested on historical facts well ascertained, it has been quite inadequate for its purpose. If not a line of Hebrew prophecy had been written till after the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, there is a mass of matter remaining which must have been as purely predictive in substance as it is in form. The future destruction of the great monarchies and cities of the East, and the future utter desolation even of the very lands on which they were erected, cannot be explained away. Resort has been had in this case to *a priori* arguments, and to abstract doctrines which assume that we have some independent knowledge of the Divine character, and of the methods which alone can or cannot be attributed to Jehovah. Thus it has been said that the idea of His visiting upon a whole region of the earth, in the form of utter desolation, the sins of certain particular generations of men who lived there, is an inconceivable idea. Yet nothing can be more certain than that this argument is in the teeth of facts and of natural laws, which, on a smaller scale, we see in continual operation. Men can, and do, bring causes into operation which are very lasting, if not absolutely permanent, in their desolating effects. Mere bad husbandry will impoverish and exhaust land for many years, whilst recuperative operations may be indefinitely postponed by injurious economic legislation, or by depopulating wars. The hundred and seventh Psalm, which is full of the essential righteousness of all Divine judgments, sees no impeachment of that righteousness in the fact that Jehovah 'turneth a

fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein [1].'

There is really no sense or reason in the argument that those truly Divine judgments which are brought about by the natural consequences of Divine laws, must fall on the individual men alone, or on the historical generations alone, that were themselves personally guilty of violent and hideous transgressions. For this kind of guilt, and nothing short of this, was the accusation of the Hebrew prophets against the people and monarchies of Babylon and of Nineveh. These were not rebuked merely for making conquests—seeing that military conquests have continually been the origin of the greatest and happiest nations—seeing especially that the Hebrews had themselves been conquerors, and always held themselves to have been, therein, both the executors of Divine judgments and the future instruments of Divine purposes. But what they saw and denounced in Nineveh and Babylon, was very different. They saw Powers which not only had no good seed in their hands to sow for the future benefit of the world, but Powers which in everything made for evil and not for good. Their conceptions of the Divine Nature were destructive to virtue—their worship was foul with unspeakable abominations—their practices in war were exceptionally ferocious and cruel even in a cruel age. They were the very incarnations of vainglorious pride, with nothing to redeem their vicious influence on the future of our race. Such is the picture of them

[1] Ps. cvii. 34.

drawn by Isaiah and Jeremiah, and it has been confirmed to the very uttermost by the recovered records of their own confessions. No more terrible story has ever been brought to light of the hideous corruption of human nature. The great boast of the Assyrian monarchies, as recorded by their inscriptions, was in the multitudes of other nations whom they had reduced to slavery—in the number of prisoners of war whom they had impaled or crucified; in the wide areas of country they had reduced to utter ruin—and especially in the number of forests and fruit trees which they had cut down and destroyed for ever. These were the triumphs which they desired to be held in perpetual remembrance by tablets of enduring material, so that to the latest generations their glory might be known[1]. And they have succeeded—but only in a sense which they did not anticipate. The waters of the Tigris and Euphrates, and the rains of heaven, crumbling at last the sunburnt bricks of their gigantic palaces, have revealed, for the everlasting instruction of the world, what demons men may become in the downward progress of corruption, and in ever-widening circles of departure from the laws of the only living and true God. They have succeeded too in proving how full of truth was the tremendous image employed by Isaiah in the denunciation of them. Hell was described as claiming them for its own, and as rising to meet them with its hideous welcome:—'Hell was moved to meet thee at thy coming,' says the

[1] See *Records of the Past* for many translated inscriptions which more than justify this description.

great prophet when he foresaw and foretold the fall of Babylon, and that utter desolation of one of the richest countries in the world which is still a solitary example of such complete and lasting ruin.

It is impossible to controvert with any success the evidence which these prophecies afford of the truthful revelations on the inevitable working of Divine laws, even in secular events, which were vouchsafed to the prophets who believed in those laws, and who meditated upon them day and night. It is unavailing to contend that some of their corresponding visions in respect to other cities and nations, do not seem to have had an equally literal fulfilment—that Damascus, for example, whose utter destruction was also predicted[1], has been a city always, and is a city still. Damascus has been taken and partially ruined many times, and its political power has been utterly destroyed. But Abana and Pharpar have never ceased to flow, and such an oasis, in such a desert, could never cease to attract inhabitants. The denunciations pronounced against Egypt[2] seem to be a striking picture of the subsequent history of that mysterious empire, and of the fate of its people during many generations. It is probable, however, that no secular prophecy of the future was ever absolutely unconditional—that changes of people, and of conduct, were always possible, which might affect the reasons for which retributions are deserved, and consequently the causes through which they were brought about. In the case of the great military

[1] Isa. xvii. 1. [2] Isa. xix.

monarchies of Mesopotamia, it is remarkable that the monumental evidence is strongly in favour of a continuous descent in the deepest depths of human corruption. The inscriptions of the earliest Babylonian kingdom, do record the execution of great works of irrigation as deeds of which the monarchs had reason to be proud. But the later inscriptions of the Assyrian kings, are generally wanting in any reference to such useful and beneficent works. Their whole thoughts seem to have been set on deeds of the fiercest cruelty and of the most insane pride. This is both the why and the how—the reason and the cause—of the results which the prophets saw and foresaw. Such wickedness led to the results predicted by necessary steps of consequence in a world governed by natural laws which are the laws of an everlasting kingdom, and of a dominion which endureth throughout all generations.

But there is another feature of Hebrew prophecy far more remarkable than the foresight which was due to insight into the deeper seated causes determining political events. Although all the sacred writers asserted strongly the possibility of a personal communion between the spirits of faithful men and the Spirit of the One Creator—although in various degrees they felt it, had comfort in it, and spoke of it as the one greatest joy in life—yet from the earliest times they had a sense of the difficulty of attaining it under the actual conditions of the world, and they looked to some great change in those conditions which would make such communion more accessible, and far more

widely prevalent. 'Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down,' was the exclamation of Isaiah[1]. And the actual occurrence of some such coming down, in some form or another, was an expectation and a hope which is the perpetual theme of prophecy. In the Songs of Israel, indeed, we seem to listen to men who, in this region of spirituality, had reached the very highest elevation. The valuable compendium of the Psalter prepared by Mr. Gladstone gives a short heading of the main subject, or prevailing thought, of each Psalm. Of these three are specified as directly devoted to 'communion with God;' but the truth is that a very much larger number of the whole collection, are nearly, if not quite, as prominently expressive of the same aspiration and of the same experience. Yet along with this sense of a privilege already in the full possession of spiritually-minded and faithful men, there are, as is well known, certain Psalms which, however obscurely and indefinitely, indicate some vision of a new means of access, and of a new exhibition of Jehovah's power in the manifestation of His character and of His law. These Psalms, together with innumerable other passages, much more definite, both in the historical and in the prophetic books, establish as an historical fact the early and lasting expectation of the Jews of the coming of some great One whom they called the Messiah. And this expectation, although often expressed in images of earthly benefits to the Hebrew race and nation, has

[1] Isa. lxiv. 1.

this special peculiarity about it, that it is mainly an expectation of a signal triumph over evil by means of some new revelation of spiritual truth to the whole of mankind. The rod of Jehovah's strength was to be sent out of Zion in the person of some one whom the Psalmist called 'his Lord,' and to whom Jehovah gave a commission with commanding strength to discharge it. Through that strength he was to 'rule in the midst of his enemies.' And yet this rule was to be a rule over reformed and willing minds. 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' Moreover that power was to consist essentially in perfect goodness and perfect truth. It was not seen as the power of mere strength exerted arbitrarily. It was seen 'in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning.' The translation in the English Prayer Book makes the conception more clear, and its expression more beautiful. 'In the day of thy power shall the people offer thee free-will offerings with an holy worship; the dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning[1].' And thus it is a characteristic of all the passages on which the Jewish expectations were founded, that the writers rise above the mere national hopes and ambitions of their race, and see in the coming One a revealer of Divine truth to all men. Jerusalem and its people are always treated as the pulpit, or as the immediate congregation, in which the Great Revealer was to appear. The second Psalm is specially clear on this conception, 'Yet have I set my King upon my holy

[1] Ps. cx.

hill of Zion. I will preach the law;' and then adding, 'Desire of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.'

The same thought is still more conspicuous, and is more explicitly expressed, in the prophetic books. If ever we are inclined to be sceptical about the applications made of passages in the Old Testament by the writers in the New—if we are ever inclined to think them arbitrary or fanciful, and to ascribe our own acquiescence in them to mere early habit and association—there is no more instructive lesson than to read the Messianic passages in the Hebrew Scriptures with a sustained effort to think of them, and to interpret them, as we should do if they had been just discovered and deciphered like so many other Eastern 'Records of the Past.' Instead of losing in wonder and significance, we shall find that they gain immensely. Even if, in the Book of Job—which is not Jewish at all, and which is an elaborate parable in the form of a dramatic poem—one celebrated passage, assuming the expectation of personal immortality[1], can be explained away by ingenious variations from the received translation of certain Hebrew words, assuredly no such process of denudation can wipe out from whole chapters in the recognized Hebrew prophets, or from many cognate passages in the historical books, the intense reality of the Messianic vision. If we try hard to make the utmost possible allowance in our own minds for Christian preconceptions, we must be

[1] Job xix. 25-7.

equally clear-sighted and firm in discounting preconceptions coming from an opposite direction. We know that the Jews did not even then hold that revealing visions of Divine truth were confined to the seed of Abraham. And this agrees with all that we should expect if there be a God at all, and if man has inherent faculties responsive to His creation, which is what we call Nature. There is therefore no reason in the preconception that in such a splendid allegory as that which has come down to us in the Book of Job there cannot have been any literal meaning in the words, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He will stand in the latter days upon the earth.' If the attempts to explain away this passage are governed at all, or mainly, by any such preconception, these attempts must be under a corresponding suspicion of fundamental error. The simplicity and majesty of the Authorized Version are strong internal evidence of its truth. The complexity and feebleness of all the attempted corrections, are equally strong internal evidence of their artificial character. The late revisers of the Old Testament have seen no reason to make any, except the most trifling, verbal change, and they have fully confirmed the old Version in the lines of sequel which are in magnificent harmony with those preceding: 'Yet from my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.'

But as regards the well-known Messianic chapters, and innumerable individual passages in the Hebrew books, all attempts at any substantial changes are

obviously futile. There are, indeed, some passages in Genesis which are so purely figurative and abstract, that probably no reader without previous knowledge of the Jewish history, could even guess what they may mean, or rather what they may cover. Such is the promise recorded, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head[1]. This is, indeed, a striking figure when it has been explained; but the explanation could hardly suggest itself to a reader with no previous knowledge or associations. But such passages only stand around the edges and the fringes of the great web of prophecy which unfolds its tissues, all shot through and through with this wonderful thread of gold. And just as in the conception of sacrifice we find the highest spiritual doctrine laid down by one of the oldest prophets, Hosea, so in the conception of some great coming deliverance, we find the same prophet, in the midst of his denunciations against the prevalence of the grossest corruptions, pausing to give utterance to this expectation in the most triumphant language: 'And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies ... and thou shalt know the Lord[2].' The whole of the older prophetic books are full of utterances of the same type, wholly vague, not only as regards time, but also as regards means, and containing no indication of any personal Deliverer. Three leading features are conspicuous—first, terrible pictures and rebukes of the corruptions of their own nation; secondly, the

[1] Gen. iii. 15. [2] Hos. ii. 19, 20.

continual assertion that these corruptions were the reasons for, and the causes of, national chastisement; thirdly, fierce denunciations of the still greater wickedness and corruptions of the surrounding heathen nations who were the enemies of Israel; fourthly, distinct, and very definite, predictions of the success of those nations in the infliction of the most dreadful calamities then associated with defeat in war; and lastly, in the midst of these convictions as to an early and a terrible future, the most confident and joyful visions of some great ultimate triumph which was to bless, not the Hebrew people alone, but the whole world.

Never in the history of man did a proud and intense spirit of patriotism find utterance, or take a form, in the least like to these. The prophets themselves who saw these visions, were sometimes as alive as any modern sceptic to the moral difficulties which they suggested. Thus Habakkuk is sorely troubled by the Chaldean triumphs over his own people, which nevertheless he foresaw as the instruments employed for the chastisement of Israel. Wicked and rebellious as his brethren had become, were not the Chaldeans far more wicked still? Why should the worst men be allowed to subdue and destroy other men who were at least better than themselves? Would not such a triumph do more harm than good both in itself and as an example unto the world? Would not the Chaldean be confirmed in all his hideous idolatries? Would not his offensive pride become more offensive still, 'imputing thus his power unto his God'? All this the prophet

feels and speaks [1]. But he bows to fact—to the system of government which he sees to be established in a world rendered mysterious by the universal lapse of man from submission to the Divine law. But although the mystery, and the wonder, does not for a moment shake his splendid confidence in the ultimate triumph of that law, yet in his agony of mind he cannot help bursting out into this tempestuous exclamation: 'Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, Thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, Thou hast established them for correction.' And then follow words which seem almost words of reproach against Jehovah: 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity; wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he [2]?' Yet in spite of this terrible misgiving which cuts so deeply into the moral government of the world as we see it now, there is no prophet who has given more magnificent expression to an absolute confidence in the final triumph of Jehovah's righteous kingdom. It is to him that we owe that great verse: 'For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea [3].' His contemporary, the Samarian Amos, presents us with exactly the same phenomenon of foreseeing the most dreadful of all national calamities—utter defeat and captivity in a foreign land—coupled with the same certainty of some

[1] Hab. i. 10, 11. [2] Hab. i. 12, 13. [3] Hab. ii. 14.

future complete deliverance. Closely similar language is used by the prophets Joel, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, all of whom carry us back to the seventh century before the Christian era.

If we try to read these books without preconceptions, there are three prominent characteristics which cannot fail to strike us—first, that whilst some actual and physical restoration of the Jews as a nation from calamity and captivity or dispersion, is always, so to speak, the framework of the prophetic vision, it always seems as if this framework were too narrow for the contents put into it. The predicted blessings are always described in language which depicts them as extending to all mankind. No mere restoration of the Hebrew people could possibly satisfy or even explain the language used. The widest extension of political power ever attained by the Hebrews, was in the days of Solomon, and his dominion was after all even at its best a small one between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates. But when any specific words are ever used at all to indicate the kingdom which was to be restored, they make no reference to such foreign conquests as those of Solomon. The small Davidic kingdom is always taken as the type of the happiest aspirations, and its restoration as representing the most blessed hope of Israel. When any person is mentioned in connexion with the national Messianic expectation, it is always David. The second characteristic of all these prophecies is that the restoration is always identified with some profound moral and spiritual reform which was to seat righteousness on

the throne, and make the Divine law as widely known as, at last, it will come to be universally obeyed. The third characteristic of these visions, is that they always represent the wide and the finally universal blessings of the Messianic age as essentially consisting in this spiritual triumph, and the Hebrew people, the Hebrew country, and the capital of the Hebrew worship, as merely the people and the spot from which this great light was first to shine upon the whole world.

It is impossible to deny the sublimity of this conception. It is impossible to deny the solitary place it occupies in the history of human thought. No other literature—no other philosophy—no other religion, presents us with anything even like in kind. It casts down to the ground all the pride of race, which was naturally intense in a people which believed itself to be a chosen race. It sees—through an immediate future which was to be calamitous and dreadful in the highest degree—some distant future in which the Hebrew people were to be little more than a passive instrument in a new and wide illumination of the world. Nor is it possible to mistake the root idea out of which this conception came. It was the idea of a kingdom which was an everlasting kingdom, governed by righteous purposes which would assuredly work out their own results through intelligible laws, and the use of adapted means. It contemplated with mourning, indeed, and sometimes with a sense of difficulty and of wonder, but yet always without dismay, the apparent success of wills, rebellious, and for a time triumphant, over Jehovah's eternal statutes.

Nor, in the earlier days of prophecy, had they any vision, even of the vaguest kind, of the means through which their hope and expectation could be attained. But when we follow the stream of prophecy as it runs down the course of history, the wonder of this Hebrew conception must increase upon us. Not only with national destruction and personal captivity foreseen as certain, but under the actual endurance of these calamities, the prophets kept up their confidence, and rose to the highest elevation in their conception of the nature of the change which was to come. Moreover, now, for the first time, they saw the nature of the chief agency that was to be employed. Before the great Babylonish Captivity, during its continuance, and after their return, they became more and more distinct in the prediction of that agency as a Person. The prince of these prophets is Isaiah. Modern criticism has maintained that many indications of internal evidence point to another authorship as commencing at the fortieth chapter of the whole book now called by his name, and continuing through the remaining chapters. It may be so; and it is evident that the mention by name of one individual man, Cyrus, a king, who was not born till 250 years later than the date claimed for the whole book, is against the analogy of prophecy, and at variance with its habitual and natural avoidance of details. It is therefore extremely probable that at least additions to the book have been made in what is called the post-exilic age. But this can make no difference whatever in the lesson we are now trying to learn as to the

characteristics of Hebrew theology. The latest date assigned for the supposed 'second Isaiah' after the Captivity, is as good for our purpose as the earlier chapters which purport to be written in the reign of Hezekiah, 750 B.C. After all, the date of the Captivity of Judah is still 588 B.C., and of the Return only seventy years later. Five hundred and thirty-six years is a long period in the history of any nation. It is as long as that which separates us from the reign of Edward III. If, therefore, the whole Book of Isaiah and not one half of it only, had been written after the Exile, it would make no difference at all so far as our present investigation is concerned. But the fact is that both portions of this book have exactly the same special marks, namely, an immense advance in the prophetic vision concerning the great agency to be employed in the blessings of the coming Messianic age. That agency was now, more and more, definitely seen to be a Person; and the position and character assigned to him have all the same mysterious peculiarities. Nevertheless this vision comes in close connexion with exactly the same ethical doctrines, and with the same spiritual application of them to the established Hebrew worship, which we have seen to be remarkable in the earliest prophets. The bloody animal sacrifices of the Levitical ritual are spoken of with denunciation and disgust:—'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats . . . Bring no more vain oblations; incense

is an abomination unto Me[1].' The coming reform was to be one of a spiritual nature. 'Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness[2].' It was not to be confined to the Jews. No local hill, however sacred, or however typical in the past, was to be the seat of the new reign. 'The mountain of the Lord's house' was to be 'established in the top of the mountains' and to be 'exalted above the hills,' and all nations were to 'flow unto it.' And the reason is explained, 'For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem[3].'

Then it is in the first, or older, division of Isaiah, not in the second, that we have the mysterious exclamation, 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end[4].' Again it is, in the same earlier division, that, coupled with these visions of a glorious future which must have appeared utterly enigmatical to the prophet's contemporaries, we have the most striking and conclusive evidence of strictly predictive prophecy in respect to mere external and political events. They are all the more striking if they were written during, or soon after, Babylon had made her long-established power felt by the Jews in the capture of Jerusalem and in the captivity of its people. The conquest of Babylon by Cyrus might,

[1] Isa. i. 11, 13. [2] Isa. i. 27. [3] Isa. ii. 2, 3. [4] Isa. ix. 6, 7.

indeed, be well concluded to be a final fall of her dominion, and of her power to afflict surrounding nations. But the prediction goes far beyond this, even to the foreseeing of ultimate results which were not reached for centuries. Babylon was still a great city in the days of Herodotus, a hundred years after the Return of the Jews ; and at the end of another hundred years the treasures found in it by Alexander the Great were so rich that it is said to have almost sated the Macedonian army. The utter destruction and even the disappearance of such a city as Babylon then was, is not one of those events which happen in the common vicissitudes of war, especially when a great river, and one of the richest soils in the world, concur to make it a natural place of human habitation. Yet nothing can be more distinct and definite, nothing even more detailed—than the prediction of Isaiah that the very site of Babylon would become indiscoverable without 'narrowly looking' at it, and wondering that such heaps and mounds should indeed be the only remains of the great and most wicked city. It was to be made a 'possession for the bittern, and pools of water,' and swept 'with the besom of destruction[1].' It is quite impossible to separate these utterances and the literal fulfilment of them from the strictest conception of predictive prophecy, none the less, but all the more, because of the fact that they are always based upon an insight—avowed and claimed—into those natural causes which are the servants of an everlasting kingdom. Unusual and

[1] Isa. xiii–xiv.

enormous wickedness is always alleged as explaining the foreseen results. 'I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible[1].' And, undoubtedly, the gross moral corruption of the people of Babylon, and the inheritance of universal hatred which their cruelty entailed upon them, were such as to cause and to explain the utter enervation and decay which did at last literally obliterate from the face of the earth one of the very greatest cities of the ancient world.

It is all in perfect consistency and harmony with these conceptions of the ultimate causes which rule the future, that the prophecies of Isaiah rise to a far higher level than had ever been attained before respecting the nature of the Great Deliverance which was the indelible, yet the indefinite, expectation of the Jewish people. And the most extraordinary feature about the prophecies of Isaiah on this subject is—not only that they centre on some one Person who was to come, but that they indicate that the power of this Person to convert and subdue the world was to be a moral or spiritual, and not a political or a military power. Much of the imagery, indeed, of an earthly kingdom is still used, as we use it ourselves in common language quite unconsciously. When, for example, we speak of the triumph of some new and great truth over the minds of men we do not even think of the proud triumphal processions which led the

[1] Isa. xiii. 11.

victorious generals up the steps of the Capitol at Rome. Yet these were what the word triumphs originally meant. So, in like manner, Isaiah keeps much of the old Hebrew language which clothed with glory and reverence the remembrance of the monarchy of David. And yet in the long series of splendid chapters which begins so suddenly at the fortieth, and are almost exclusively devoted to rapturous visions of the great national hope, there are innumerable passages which are wholly incompatible with the idea of any local or any earthly kingdom. 'The glory of the Lord was to be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together[1].' The universality of the coming deliverance is dwelt upon in the old spirit, indeed, but with a new particularity and emphasis: 'Behold My servant, whom I uphold, Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth: I have put My spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles[2].' The imagery employed to describe the new power, is not that of mere strength, nor of the sword, nor of any outward dominion. It was to be the power of some slow and gentle influence which no opposition could discourage, and no resistance could finally overcome. Moreover the whole pagan world is repeatedly represented as the arena of this mysterious contest, and of its glorious but purely spiritual triumph. The gentleness of the new Deliverer is emphatically described: 'He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall not

[1] Isa. xl. 5. [2] Isa. xlii. 1.

fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment on the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law[1].'

In the forty-ninth chapter we have what seems to be a dialogue between Jehovah and the Servant who was to be His agent in bringing all this to pass. The Servant knows that the weapon he was sent to use was to be, not his arm holding a sword, but his mouth uttering words. He sees discouragement and apparent failure. In spite of the promise 'Thou art My servant, in whom I will be glorified,' he complains, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength in nought'; and this complaint seems to be distinctly connected with a foresight that so far as his own nation was concerned, his work, at least for a time, would be a failure. Yet under this forecast the Servant is comforted by an assurance that though 'formed from the womb to bring Jacob again to him,' yet it was 'a light thing' to 'raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel,' compared with that larger work in the conversion of the heathen world, which was to be his reward: 'that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth[2].' The rejection was to be local, the triumph was to be universal. 'To him whom man despiseth, whom the nation abhorreth, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall come to worship.' The incredulity with which such a message was sure to be received by a people who could neither understand the means to be employed, nor the kind of end which was alone to be attained, is depicted in the fifty-third chapter

[1] Isa. xlii. 2-4. [2] Isa. xlix. 4-6.

with every image which increases the wonder of the vision both as to means and ends. If we try to read this chapter free from preconceptions, it is impossible to conceive anything more mysterious or at the same time more majestic, when we consider it as a conception of the Messiah whom the Hebrew people had been long accustomed to expect. That it is so intended is certain from the perfect continuity of its general ideas with those which had been involved both in the historical and in the oldest prophetic books. There is no abatement in the confidence of a final triumph, nor in the glory which is ascribed to it. But along with this there are new and strange details which connect the coming One with a humble origin—with a want of outward attractiveness in the eyes of men—with the endurance of grief, sorrow, and affliction; with rejection and despising; and with a violent death.

And yet in the midst of this vision which may well have seemed to the seer himself as mysterious as it did to his contemporaries and to later generations of his race, there sounds the old true note of all Hebrew theology, the note, namely, which connects inseparably the Messianic hope with the triumph of the Divine law, through some fresh promulgation,—a more perfect knowledge—and a wider acceptance of it. The triumph was to be attained by these means, and to consist in this result. Of the Servant who, through such dark passages of life, was to accomplish this great work, the vision says, 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:

by his knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities[1].' Nor is the other old note wanting—that, namely, which treats with disparagement the idea of any local worship, of mere carnal sacrifices, and which, in contradistinction to it, dwells upon a life of righteousness. Indeed, in proportion as the prophetic mind saw more close and near the inclusion of the Gentile world to whom a local worship would be impossible, and for whom no place or form of sacrifice was to be prescribed, it became only the more emphatic in proclaiming that old doctrine of a purely spiritual worship as the great characteristic of the coming Deliverance. The old argument against sacrifice is reiterated,—that which rests on the universal sovereignty of God,—on His universal presence; 'The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest[1]?'

If all this was really spoken, as is now contended, immediately after the return from captivity, when the Hebrew people were highly excited by the rebuilding of the Temple, and by all the revived political and national hopes which were inseparable from their traditions, it only shows more signally the lofty superiority of the prophetic eye when—in contrast with the local Temple—it sees the great law which governs all acceptable worship: 'but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart and trembleth at My word.' Again and again is this

[1] Isa. liii. 11. [2] Isa. lxvi. 1.

teaching reiterated by the later Isaiah in the very midst of a restored ritual and of the self-delusions which it might well engender. There is no more sharp piercing into these delusions, no more withering rebuke of them, in any part of the Hebrew Scriptures, than that presented in the few verses of the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, which denounces those which were connected with ostentatious fasts. These formal solemnities are vividly and even mockingly described. And the reason is given. They were no real mortification, but only pretences of it. The subtle temptations which tend to undermine the reality of worship had so invaded the Jewish practice, that the pretended days of humiliation were really days of self-gratification :—'Behold, in the days of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours;'—'Behold, ye fast for strife and debate,' and 'to make your voice to be heard on high.' Then comes the contrast, 'Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and to loose every yoke[1]?' There is no difference here between the second Isaiah and the oldest prophets; but the teaching stands in more close connexion with a vision far more immediate and distinct of the nature of that great change which was to spread the knowledge of such Divine truths over the whole world.

[1] Isa. lviii. 3-6.

In the same connexion we cannot fail to note one other remarkable development of all that, in germ only, had been contained in the earlier Hebrew writings. The personality of Jehovah, indeed, had been always a fundamental conception. But His corresponding relations with the souls of individual men—the personality of man in its relation to the personality of God—had been a less marked feature in the teaching of the older historians and prophets. The patriarchs, the lawgivers, the soldiers, and the kings, who are the chosen heads of the chosen people, are always, as it were, representative, rather than mere individual, men. They were the agents employed in a great work in, and upon, a great national instrumentality. They were the makers, the bearers, the guides, and defenders of the ark. But they were not in themselves a temple or a place wherein the Most High could dwell. Moses, indeed, was a man to whom it was conceived Jehovah personally spoke, and Abraham was called His friend. But both had high political functions assigned to them in founding and leading the race which was 'the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.'

The possibility of such high and close personal intercourse with the God of Israel, had been indeed long familiar, at least as regarded the leaders of the adopted people. But now, as the more spiritual conceptions which had always underlain the very earliest Hebrew worship, were coming into closer view with the approaching call to the Gentile world, these conceptions undergo a corresponding enlargement and find more

explicit and definite expression. There is nothing anywhere else in the Hebrew writings which is quite like that wonderful burst of universal invitation to all individual souls which marks the opening of the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah—'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' To every individual soul the promise is held out of enjoying a converse which had before been the privilege of a few: 'Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David[1].' The whole imagery of the special blessings which had been so long associated exclusively with a small nation and a limited geographical area, is here pressed into the service of depicting the nature and results of a new revelation which was to be made accessible to every soul of man. Nor is it possible to mistake the leading idea of the means by which this new accessibility is to be attained. The whole stream of Isaiah's prophecy rests on the vision of a new Personality who could be, and was to be, seen on earth, and who could therefore be personally known and personally loved as Jehovah never could have been known and loved before.

Quite as obvious and still more wonderful is the fact that the sentiment of compassion, which is often so deep-seated an element in the noblest forms of human love, is seen by the prophet as one of the most

[1] Isa. lv. 3.

powerful attractions which were to operate on the world in favour of the new Deliverer. Triumph, indeed, there is, and triumph, too, clothed in the old imagery of national ambition. And yet the passages are numerous and explicit which represent it as a purely spiritual triumph which was to be as the shining upon all men of one great self-revealing light. But a triumph through suffering, and a triumph, in part at least, by means of suffering, was a new conception altogether. It is true that the idea of Jehovah as a Father of His children, and as suffering grief on account of their rebellion, is an element in the old theology of the Hebrews. Isaiah clearly does not conceive himself to be saying anything new when he utters the pathetic words, 'In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them.' But that any feeling of compassion could ever be felt by man towards any Being representing the Godhead, or that any such feeling could ever be appealed to as even an element in drawing men to the spiritual apprehension and worship of the Divine law, would seem to have been impossible in the earlier days of Messianic expectation. The prophet himself seems to have felt what may be called its natural incredibility, and to have foreseen the rejection of it, when, in giving utterance to his vision, he stops for a moment and bursts out in the exclamation, 'Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' And yet there can be no doubt whatever that the language in which he proceeds to describe his vision was intended in his mind to describe the

life, sufferings, and death, of that Great One of whose coming and of whose work there had been so many mysterious intimations throughout the whole history and writings of the Hebrews. He is seen still in shadow, and no more. It is as if the seer saw great leading outlines only, and there is the inevitable obscurity in details which is natural in the atmosphere of prophecy.

If we try to imagine what a Jew of that time could have made out in reading what Isaiah wrote in that mysterious fifty-third chapter, we can well understand the question which was actually put to the Christian apostle, Philip, some 500 years later by the man of Ethiopia who was coming up in a chariot on the road from Egypt to worship at Jerusalem and was reading on his way this chapter of Isaiah, 'I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man[1]?' Of whom was it that so strange a prediction could be uttered? 'He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away; and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.' And if such a prediction might well puzzle a Gentile, even more might it puzzle a Jew who was accustomed to think of a Messiah in connexion with some great restoration of national power and glory. And yet, however obscure in details this chapter undoubtedly is, there are several characteristics which it is impossible to mistake. In the first place it is

[1] Acts viii. 34.

important to observe that it is closely connected with the preceding passages, which are in perfect harmony with all previous Messianic intimations: 'Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion: put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; from henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.' There is the old note of triumph here. No Jew could have any difficulty in recognizing it as in perfect harmony with all the old national traditions. Then, although perhaps more spiritual than before, the like may be said of the poetic image, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; . . . that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! . . . Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem.' This is again the old note of triumph as before. It identifies, beyond all doubt, the object of the prophet's vision with the old hope of Israel which in various forms had been so often expressed before. Nor is there any change in the reference here made to the personal element which had always been associated with that hope: 'Behold, My servant shall deal prudently: he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.'

But from this passage the prophet passes to visions of that Personality which are altogether new. They address themselves especially to the sentiment of compassion, which is not only one of the strongest emotions of our nature when it is effectually aroused,

but may be also one of the most powerful and permanent in its effects when it is inseparably connected with motives, and with relations to fact, which are also permanent. But as directed towards One who in any way was to represent the power and mercy of the God of Israel, the idea of any appeal to compassion had never before been associated with the Hebrew foreshadowings of their Deliverer. And yet the most striking feature in this vision of Isaiah, is not only the pathetic repetition of an appeal of this nature in various forms of most graphic imagery, but the presentation of some extraordinary suffering as the very means by which the great triumph was to be secured. The one great feature in that triumph which had always been prominent in Messianic predictions, namely, the conquest of the Gentile world, is referred to by Isaiah in words which seem expressly to connect it with the effect of this mysterious ministry of pain: 'So shall he sprinkle many nations.'

The burst of incredulity with which the prophet foresees that this message will be received by those to whom it was to be most immediately addressed, is one of the most striking parts of his vision, and it is by no means inconceivable that he may himself have been conscious of the temptation to it. But, if so, he is overpowered by the definiteness and reality of the impressions which are revealed to him. So that, instead of conciliating that incredulity by passing lightly over this new and mysterious aspect of the means to be employed, he goes on to dwell upon it and to express it with a particularity which was as

unlike the older forms of prophecy as it was new in the conceptions they had hitherto conveyed. There is no abatement whatever in the former assurance of ultimate triumph. But that triumph is emphatically coupled with the idea of a victory through suffering and death. In the last three verses of this wonderful vision, these two notes are inseparably interwoven. He of whom the prophet spoke was 'to see his seed,' he was to 'prolong his days,' and 'the pleasure of the Lord was to prosper in his hand.' But all this was to be out of 'the travail of his soul,' the 'pouring out of his soul unto death,' and the being 'numbered with the transgressors.'

There is indeed no explanation here given, no theory here propounded, or even indicated as to the nature of the connexion between the suffering and its results, except in so far as the words 'when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin' contain an obvious allusion to the old laws of Hebrew sacrifice. But the high spiritual interpretation which the prophets, as we have seen, had always put upon the essence of those sacrifices, stamps upon this allusion a corresponding import. The words 'by his knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many,' point to that profound doctrine concerning the nature of all true worship of which, as we have seen, the Hebrew Scriptures are full—the doctrine, namely, that as Jehovah is absolute Truth, so perfect knowledge would be perfect worship. It would be a complete seeing of universal and eternal facts—a complete hearing of the Divine word—and a complete fulfilment of the

Divine law. If there is anything new in Isaiah's vision of the outward circumstances attending the realization of the old national hope, there is none whatever in this deepest teaching of the old Hebrew theology. Nowhere is the idea more powerfully expressed which, as it connects goodness with knowledge, does also connect sin with increasing and hopeless ignorance: 'we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness[1].' And this idea is continually connected with the remedy which was to come: 'And He (the Lord) saw there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor . . . And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob.' Then follows that sublime burst of adoring welcome which is in perfect harmony with the old national idea, and with that grand peculiarity of the Hebrew theology which identified the future glory of Israel with the widest and greatest blessings to the whole human race: 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising[2].'

We shall lose nothing, on the contrary we shall gain immensely, by reading all these prophecies with the strongest effort to forget, or put aside, all interpretations which to us have become traditional, and

[1] Isa. lix. [2] Isa. lx. 1–3.

if we try our very utmost to imagine how they must have appeared to Jews of the age in which they were written. Nor does it matter anything, in this effort, whether we take the earliest or the very latest possible date for their composition, whether before, or during, or after the Exile. For it must be remembered that, although Isaiah is more definite than others, and his touches of delineation are more graphic than those of others, the same conceptions exactly are reproduced by those who have been called the Minor Prophets, some of whom wrote expressly in the character of men who had themselves been captives in Babylon, who had seen the Return, and who were witnesses of the rebuilding of the Temple. In some respects, certain of their utterances are quite as remarkable as those of Isaiah. In particular it is to be noted that at a moment of great national excitement, when the Israelites must have been under the strongest temptation to dwell on the purely secular aspects of the old promises, we find, on the contrary, the highest spiritual interpretations and the least possible tendency to look for mere local blessings, or mere tribal triumphs. Micah hails the days when 'the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and the people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come . . . for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' Habakkuk hears an express order to write the vision of a coming time which, even if it tarried, was to be waited for 'because it will surely

come to pass.' And the burden of the vision was to rebuke pride and to inaugurate a reign when 'the just shall live by faith[1]'—with this glorious consummation held out—'for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Haggai is roused to enthusiasm by the rebuilding of the Temple, and cheers the builders by a vision of its future glories. But the vision seems, as it were, to overpower him, and instead of prophesying any renewal of an ancient but a vanished kingdom, he sees some great moral revolution in the condition of mankind which was to make the second Temple more glorious indeed than the first, but more glorious because it was to belong not to the Jews only but to the whole world: 'And I will shake all nations, and the desire of nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts[2].'

Zechariah is much more obscure; but the element of personality in the hope of Israel is strongly marked in the image of a branch, and in the language used in explanation of it—'My servant the Branch;' 'the man whose name is the Branch,' who was to be the builder of the Temple, the bearer of its glory—the ruler upon a throne, combining the characters of a Priest and of a King[3]. There is much in this book that must have seemed enigmatical at the time, and is hardly less so now. But there is always the same undertone, and one remarkable passage is to be noted which seems to be connected with a vision of the

[1] Hab. ii. [2] Hag. ii. 7. [3] Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12, 13.

final destruction of Jerusalem, and of a time when the meaning of the great events connected with the second Temple could not, and would not, be understood, although they would assuredly make themselves known at last: 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark. But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them towards the former sea, and half of them towards the hinder sea[1].' Malachi is most distinct of all: 'Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts[2].'

Such being the language of the prophets who admittedly wrote after the Exile, and after the Return, it is a matter of complete indifference so far as our present purpose is concerned, whether the second part of the Book of Isaiah be of the same date with the first part or not. That purpose has been to identify the root ideas of Hebrew theology through all stages of their development; and the latest of these stages is quite as important and as telling as the earliest. 'There is, indeed, a wonderful homogeneousness throughout, a persistency of fundamental conceptions which reduces to complete insignificance the mere questions

[1] Zech. xiv. 6-8. [2] Mal. iii. 1.

of date and of personal authorship over which the 'higher criticism' ranges with its strange mixture of laborious care, and of mere fanciful ingenuity. The results of our investigation are absolutely independent of all these questions of mere date within the range of Jewish history. But, on the other hand, these results do absolutely condemn some of the canons of criticism which have been laid down for the determination of those subordinate questions of date and authorship. The preconception that prophecy is impossible in the purely predictive sense of foreseeing and foretelling political and secular events, is a preconception which is as inconsistent with philosophy as with facts. As a matter of fact, it is certainly untrue that each prophet saw only, or saw even mainly, the circumstances of his own day, and that their visions were entirely dominated by the passing phenomena of their own time. All of them lived much in the past. All of them spoke continually of it. All of them saw the present in its light; and all of them read the future in an organic continuity of connexion with both. There is no more signal example of this than the prophets of the post-exilic time. So far from being engrossed with the outward events of that time, exciting as they must have been to every Jew, they were absorbed, on the contrary, with visions of a future which must have been largely unintelligible to their contemporaries, and which, in details at least, were probably almost as unintelligible to themselves. If the writer of the latter half of the Book of Isaiah really wrote at that time, as very possibly he may

have done, then is he only the most conspicuous proof of the deep-seated error which vitiates the assumptions adverse to predictive prophecy. In the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah we have a most touching picture of the intense excitement of the returned exiles in the reconstitution of their State, and especially in the rebuilding of their temple. And one of the most striking features in that picture is the passionate reversion of the Jews to the old practices of that Levitical ritual which, in its narrowest sense, had been called 'The Law.' We hear, in tones of exultation, of the great scale on which the rites of bloody animal sacrifice were revived. The site of Jehovah's worship must have been converted into veritable shambles. A hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and twelve he-goats to represent the twelve tribes, all these are the tale of slaughtered beasts with which 'the Children of the Captivity' kept the dedication of that House of God with joy [1]. Moreover, the old exclusiveness of the Jews, and the desire of a sharp separation from all other nations, returned upon the returning exiles with a passion which seems to have felt no scruple about a cruel repudiation of the wives and mothers and children with whom they had lived in a long exile [2].

There is only one of the prophetic books—that of Haggai—which breathes, at all, the excitement of the Return, and he is the prophet who sees that the glory of the Second Temple is to be the coming of One who is not a Jewish Messiah alone, but of One who is

[1] Ezra vi. 16. [2] Ezra x. 3.

specially seen and described as the 'desire of all nations[1].' If it be indeed true that the second Isaiah prophesied after the Return, or even before the Return, but with near prospect of it among the exiles of Babylon who trusted in the character and policy of Cyrus, there could not be a more striking proof of the extent to which the great prophetic writers of the Hebrew race, soared above the atmosphere of their own immediate surroundings, and how little their visions were 'conditioned' by mere contemporary feelings and events. For then it would follow that at that time either of exulting joy, or of sanguine expectation—due to the prospect of a national and strictly local restoration, and of full liberty to worship their God according to the revived ritual of a local worship—we have a whole series of the most deeply and purely spiritual utterances to be found in any of the Hebrew books, whether of prophecy or of song. Much of the old imagery is, indeed, retained, but it is always transfused with the light of a new and universal interpretation. This great seer, if he wrote in Babylon, did indeed have visions of a speedy return, but it was to be a return to laws of universal authority over all the children of men: 'My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed[2].' No 'son of the stranger' who might lay hold on that righteousness and might thus join himself to the Lord, was any longer to feel that, because he was not born a Jew, he was 'utterly separated' from the Lord's people[3]. Every soul of man who by obedience and faith kept

[1] Hag. ii. 7. [2] Isa. lvi. 1. [3] Isa. lvi. 3.

the everlasting laws, was seen as a soul 'taking hold of that covenant,' which had been so long exclusively associated with the seed of Abraham. The Temple at Jerusalem was, indeed, spoken of as built up again, but it was expressly described as a place that would be called 'a place of prayer for all people.' The walls of Jerusalem were also described as built up again, but the same glorious conception of their purpose and function, is typified in the beautiful image of walls on which the God of all the earth was to set watchmen who should never hold their peace day nor night, since those who make mention of the Lord were never to be silent until God had established Jerusalem as a 'praise in the earth[1].'

In chapter after chapter of the second Isaiah these conceptions are pursued through every form of language and of imagery, always vivid, often splendid, not seldom most tender and pathetic—conceptions which might help, as it were, to tread under foot all lower thoughts associated with mere national pride, or with any kind of limitation whether of place, or of blood, or of time, upon the blessings which were foreseen as coming through the advent of one Divine Person. If, writing before the Return, he could foresee, as he easily might do, the intense national excitement that would find vent in the holocausts of beasts which Haggai did actually live to witness, or if, writing after the Return, he looked back upon them as at least a memorable scene in history, it is really wonderful to observe how this second Isaiah was absolutely

[1] Isa. lxii.

unmoved by it, and how loftily he maintained the ancient prophetic tones on the only true meaning of sacrifice. Not in any passage of the older prophets is there anywhere such language of contempt, and even of bitterness, poured out upon the whole idea of literal temples, and of altars dripping with the blood of beasts, as in this great writer of whom modern criticism boasts that it has brought him down to dates when the Jews, if not saturated with the narrowest conceptions, were at least under the strongest temptation to be so. It is all the more magnificent if it was really under such conditions that the second Isaiah wrote the very latest chapter assigned to him, or even if some nameless and unknown successors, inheriting the same old prophetic spirit, were the authors of it. For in that chapter the very idea of any local temple is attacked with scorn: 'Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest? For all those things hath Mine hand made.' Then follows the indication of the only true temple as being the individual soul in communion with a personal God, and with His everlasting law: 'But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word.' In contrast with this true temple, and with the devotion to God by worshippers of that which is really their own, the mere bloody sacrifices of the Second Temple are spoken of with disgust. The killing of an ox, the sacrifice of a lamb, the offering of an oblation, the burning of incense, are all severally

mentioned, and are all branded under odious similitudes, as representing nothing of the realities of a true and acceptable worship[1].

Ezekiel is the prophet who, writing in the midst of the Exile, and as a captive beside the river Chebar, is most engrossed by the prospect and by the vision of a national restoration—of a literal and geographical return. For all other nations, and especially for those who rejoiced over the fall of the Jewish kingdom, he sees only days of retributive vengeance—of the inevitable ruin of their power, and of the desolation of their lands. There is no vision in Ezekiel of the place which the New Jerusalem was to take in some universal illumination of the world; and in this fact, indeed, we may well see the limitations of view which were connected with his place and time. The Jews living as captives in the low, hot, Mesopotamian plains, and with a passionate longing for their ancient home, must have needed above all things some hope of seeing its breezy hills again, and of resting once more upon them. And so it was the special function of this great prophet to minister this hope to his brethren in exile, and to dwell both on the causes of their fall and on the immediate conditions of their return. Yet there is no prophet whose writings are more faithful to the fundamental ideas of the old Hebrew theology. His denunciations of idolatry, and his minute descriptions and pictures of the many ways in which the Jews had fallen into the very lowest of its depths, are all directed to impress upon

[1] Isa. lxvi. 3.

the mind the grossness and the heinousness of it as the master sin of the ancient world. In all its forms —even in those which were in themselves the least gross, as for example in the worship of the sun— idolatry was a departure from the one only living and true God. It tended invariably to more and more corrupting embodiments—falling down at last among all the surrounding nations, to the personification and worship of man's own fiercest passions and foulest imaginations. Ezekiel's prophecies of a national return were all expressly conditional upon a spiritual return to the exclusive worship of Jehovah. Nor is there any prophet who is so emphatic, and so plain, in his definitions of that spirit, and of that conduct, which alone could be pleasing in his sight. These consisted simply in a life of righteousness. The whole of the eighteenth chapter is an elaborate answer to difficulties and objections to a belief in the Divine government which arise out of the inequalities and apparent injustices in the fates of men. He connects the universal ownership of God over all human souls with a vindication of the principle on which his individual disposal of them is conducted: 'Behold, all souls are Mine . . . the soul that sinneth, it shall die. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,' if he 'hath walked in My statutes, and hath kept My judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live[1].'

The idea that human souls have no right to reason, and no power of reasoning, on such subjects at all, is

[1] Ezek. xviii. 4–9.

an idea which does not seem even to occur to Ezekiel. This is not an uncommon doctrine now, and has been implied or directly taught by not a few who value religion sincerely. They think that the weapons of scepticism are safe weapons to turn against itself. But agnosticism of this kind was, and it must have always been, inconceivable to those whose theology had, above all things, taught them that Jehovah's kingdom was to be a righteous kingdom, and a dominion founded on everlasting and intelligible laws. And so the great prophet of the Exile allows the expression of a natural, but an ignorant, human expostulation on the subject, and represents the Almighty as condescending to answer and to explain: 'Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not My way equal? are not your ways unequal? . . . therefore I will judge you[1].' This emphatic tribute to the value of each rational soul in its relation to a personal God, is all the more striking in a prophet who was so much engrossed by the prospect of a tribal restoration, and of the renewal of a highly organized priestly worship which was peculiar to one place and to one nation. Although Ezekiel does not seem to have seen what Isaiah saw—the inclusion of all nations as the highest glory of Israel's Return—he did see the fundamental theological facts on which that far higher vision was revealed to others. Neither does he seem to have seen as prominently at least as they saw, the personal element in the advent of a Messiah. He does indeed see and predict the

[1] Ezek. xviii. 25.

renewed kingdom of Israel as to be reconstituted under some one Servant of God to whom he assigns the typical name of David. But his spiritual place and functions in the world are all apparently subordinated to the vision of a restored Hebrew kingdom.

Jeremiah has a wider range of vision, though in exile he was Ezekiel's contemporary and his friend. But he had also lived and prophesied before the Captivity, and had foretold it. There is indeed no difference whatever between the theological conceptions of the two prophets, nor in the general burden of their song. But Jeremiah is the more spiritual of the two—the most far-reaching in his intimations of the future. In no Hebrew writing is there any image employed more beautiful or more profound than that which Jeremiah uses when he compares the true God to the only 'fountain of living waters,' and all departures from Him as nothing but a laborious hewing out of 'broken cisterns, that can hold no water[1].' Water welling out of the depth of the earth is an excellent type of Divine truth uprising from the very nature and heart of things. And this is a root idea in the theology of the Hebrew prophets. The identity of that Truth with the life-giving energies, and elements, and laws of Nature—the absolute contrast which in every sphere of thought it presents to all the mere imaginations of men—the quality which was inherent in it of escaping, and, as it were, draining away from every artificial receptacle hewn out for it by man's labour and device—this is the

[1] Jer. ii. 13.

constant current of their teaching. The inevitable connexion of suffering and of misfortune with sin considered as a departure from Divine laws, is a correlative and inseparable doctrine. Jeremiah expresses it very clearly—'I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but have rejected it[1].' Nor is he less emphatic in rebuking the smallest reliance on the ritual sacrifices which were so deeply interwoven with all the national ideas of Hebrew worship. He calls upon his brethren to go back to a simpler time, before these sacrifices had been instituted at all, but when the Divine hand had been conspicuous in turning the events of history in their favour, and when gratitude and obedience to a living God, was all that was demanded of them: 'For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you[2].'

It is in perfect consistency with this high spiritual theology, but in wonderful contrast, surely, with the mere natural feelings of a Jew who wrote in the immediate anticipation of the heaviest calamities to be inflicted by heathen nations, that Jeremiah glories and comforts himself in some approaching call to the Gentile world, and in some wide acceptance of it:

[1] Jer. vi. 19. [2] Jer. vii. 22, 23.

'O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto Thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit[1].' Perhaps even more remarkable is the language of Jeremiah in dwelling on the individuality of all true religion, as having its seat in the personality of individual men, and not less as having to struggle there with the greatest impediments to its power: 'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters[2].' On the other hand, this prophet lays down, as no other Hebrew writer had before done, the great fact and law of the tendencies to corruption which are of universal prevalence in every soul of man: 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings[3].'

The vision of Jeremiah, however, as to the personal or Messianic element in the glory of Israel, is far more limited and local than the vision of the second Isaiah. The images under which he represents the great restoration which he foresaw, are all physical and local images—such as of a land in which property would be secure—so that fields would again be bought and sold for money, and flocks would again 'pass under the hands of him that telleth them.' These are vivid

[1] Jer. xvi. 19. [2] Jer. xvii. 7, 8. [3] Jer. xvii. 9, 10.

and beautiful images of a pastoral and an agricultural people restored to a sense of security for property, that is to say, to a life of confidence and of peace. And it is in close connexion with this purely national and local idea of the Divine promises, that he sees the vision of a Person by whom it was to be realized: 'In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.' And again, 'For thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually[1].' How far this language was consciously metaphorical in the mind of the prophet, is a question which cannot be answered without knowing more than we do of the nature of the prophetic impulse—of the occasions on which it came—and of the forms it took in the individual minds which were subject to it. But this may be safely said, that to the Jews of his own day the language of Jeremiah must have seemed to promise a strictly national restoration, a local worship as before, and a kingdom like to that of David or of Solomon. This, at all events, would have been a natural interpretation to them, preoccupied as their minds must have been by the old traditional conceptions.

And yet we cannot fail to see in this prophet the

[1] Jer. xxxiii. 15, 17, 18.

same extraordinary character which belongs to all the others, as well as to the Psalms, a character, as it were, of superabundance and of overflow, so that the implied meanings and intimations conveyed, stretch to an illimitable distance beyond the containing walls of the language and of the imagery. These walls seem to be, as it were, constantly breaking down under the strain, and stretch, which were too heavy for them to bear, and through the rifts and openings in them we see issuing forth visions and promises which can mean nothing less than a new heavens and a new earth. And these are always connected, however dimly, with the idea of a Person through whom, and in whom, these promises were to be fulfilled. It is in the fulness, and in the definiteness, of the language conveying this idea that the Isaiah of the Captivity stands pre-eminent. But it is present more or less in all the prophets, and when we come to the few prophets who wrote undoubtedly after the Return, in the midst of all the disappointment which must have arisen from the actual facts of that event, and the total absence of any visible prospect of a great kingdom being ever restored, all the brilliance and majesty of the Messianic vision of a coming Person and a coming spiritual dominion, breaks out again: 'Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like

fullers' soap, and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness[1].'

Nothing could be more dark and enigmatical than this language to the contemporaries of the prophet, so far as regarded any possibility of foreseeing any actual events through which it could be fulfilled. Nothing, on the other hand, could be more luminous than the outline as indicating not an earthly, but a spiritual kingdom, and the outpouring into old forms of a new spirit and a new understanding of all that constituted really acceptable worship. The purifying of the sons of Levi in order that they may offer the true sacrifice of righteousness, is the condition of the promises conveyed; and the bringing about of this consummation, is clearly connected with the instrumentality of a Person. The description of him as the 'Messenger of the Covenant' in which the Hebrew people were accustomed to delight, connects this coming Person with the oldest traditions, and the dearest hopes of the seed of Abraham. Yet here too the prophetic vision does not fail to take in that wider horizon which, in the atmosphere of prophecy, had never been separated from the narrow skies of that narrow land which lay between the Jordan and the sea: 'And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of Hosts[2].' Perhaps in no passage of all the Hebrew books does the overflow of meaning beyond the mere letter,

[1] Mal. iii. 1-3. [2] Mal. iii. 12.

appear more conspicuously than in the six verses which have been divided off as constituting the last chapter of the prophet Malachi. The ultimate and universal triumph of a spiritual worship, and the application both of threatenings and of promises to all the wicked and to all the proud, could not be more powerfully conceived or expressed than in the beautiful image, 'But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.' The mere imagery nevertheless continues to be Jewish to the last. The law of Moses, as delivered on Horeb, is referred to as the great standard and exemplar, and the Person who was to come is typically called Elijah. Yet through all this imagery the splendour of a new vision shines, and the coming of some incomparably greater One than had ever appeared before [1].

The Book of Daniel has been the subject of keen dispute in respect to its true date, because of the bearing which it has on the question of purely predictive prophecy concerning the course of such secular events as the succession of the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman Empires. Those who start with a fixed preconception that no prediction of this kind is possible, have recourse, naturally enough, to the further assumption that where such predictions do appear to have been fulfilled, they were in reality no predictions at all, but were written after the events, and have been merely attributed to an old prophetic authorship. This has been the course taken with reference to

[1] Mal. iv.

certain parts of the Book of Daniel. But this question of date has no bearing on the subject we are now considering, which is the teaching and the conceptions of Hebrew theology from its first appearance in the world to its last and latest expressions in the sacred writings of the Jews. As regards this question, it matters nothing whether the Book of Daniel as we now have it, or parts of it only, may have been written at the date when it purports to have been written, or even as late as the close of the Hebrew canon in the second century before our era. In either case it is equally representative of Jewish religious thought, and of the latest forms taken by its theology. And in this book, where it deals with the Messianic hope of Israel, we find exactly the same phenomena as before, with only one circumstance which is peculiar, and that is an apparently predicted time, or date, for the appearance of the coming One. Yet this element of seeming chronological precision—so unusual in Hebrew prophecy—is veiled under allegorical forms of language, which render it of difficult interpretation even now, and which must have made it wholly unintelligible to the Jews at any possible date to which the prophecy may be assigned. The 'seventy weeks' do not seem to be intended for weeks of seven literal days, whilst the other indications given of preceding, or of contemporary, events are all shrouded in that atmosphere of mystery which is characteristic of all the prophetic books. But not less do there shine out in a conspicuous light certain great leading conceptions which cannot be mistaken.

Like Isaiah, Daniel sees a Messiah who is to suffer before he triumphs. That triumph was to be the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness, not the restoration of an earthly kingdom. He was to be a Person called 'the Messiah, the Prince.' He was to be 'cut off, but not for himself'; whilst the remainder of the vision points to some terrible destruction and overthrow, which was to accompany the final close of the whole Hebrew polity and local worship. The sacrifice and the oblation were to cease, and the abomination of desolation was to overspread Jerusalem until the consummation[1].

The prayer of Daniel which precedes the vision is one of the most magnificent passages in all the Hebrew sacred books. It is a typical embodiment of their theology, and of the extraordinary phenomena which are characteristic of its relation to the history and religion of the Israelitish people. No other people has ever preserved, as sacred, any writings of such a nature—writings which are one long continuous and almost unbroken series of bitter reproaches, of tender remonstrance, of lofty rebukes, and of the most fearful denunciations—all directed against themselves. It is an absolutely unique fact in the history of Man. Such a treasuring of self-accusations seems almost unnatural, that is to say, it is in violation of many tendencies in humanity which generally prevail, and which could only be overcome, and be accounted for, by some higher agency having unusual power over the minds and hearts of men, and which never elsewhere

[1] Dan. ix. 24–27.

have been brought into such concentrated and powerful action. Nor is there any possibility of mistaking what that agency was, when we read such outpourings of the Hebrew soul as this prayer of Daniel in the first year of the reign of the Persian king, Darius. It was not merely a vague belief in some one Divine Being, but an immanent and abiding sense of the presence of a Personal and Living God, who acts on laws and principles which are intelligible to man, and who had especially so acted in all the relations of a long and wonderful history with one chosen race. The misfortunes which had come upon that race, were due to departure from those laws which were essentially laws of righteousness. Repentance, and a turning again to obedience, was the only hope of deliverance. But what is specially remarkable in connexion with our subject here, is the conception of this Personal God having taken human means and instrumentalities to communicate the knowledge of His laws, a conception woven into the very texture of the whole prayer: 'We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments: neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets, which spake in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land[1].' And yet in this conception of a Personal God there is no lowering of the Divine Majesty down to the measure of a man. Daniel's invocation is a splendid illustration of the combination of those two apparently

[1] Dan. ix. 5, 6.

incompatible ideas, the intelligibility of the Godhead on the one hand, and yet its ineffable majesty and inscrutability on the other: 'O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments.' And here, again, the characteristic idea of a universal call to righteousness, and of a universal covenant with every individual soul of man as founded on it, breaks in upon a prayer that is nevertheless altogether framed upon the old familiar Jewish language which identifies Jerusalem as God's city and as His holy mountain. And it was in answer to this prayer, which, in the form and language of its actual petitions, is purely Jewish and bounded by the horizon of local hopes and expectations, that a vision follows full of mysterious intimations pointing to some totally different consummation.

The indications of an actual date for the fulfilment of this vision are by far the least important part of the prophecies of Daniel. Those indications may, or may not, with certainty be identified with the date of later historical events. This has been the subject of a long-standing controversy. But the earlier date may be either vindicated or denied, with entire indifference to the point dwelt on here, namely, the wide divergence between the prophet's own petitions and the whole line of thought taken by the vision which he sees in response to them. The comparative narrowness of the one, the mysterious and obscure, but the unmistakable grandeur and universal scope of the other—this is a contrast which it is impossible to mistake.

If we start with the preconception, as so many do, that prophets can only have seen what they were beforehand prepared to see—that their vision was always naturally and necessarily limited to the horizon of their own individual or national consciousness and experience, we must be confounded indeed by the facts before us. Daniel, or the later Hebrew writer represented by this name, seems in prayer to think, and to speak, of nothing but Jerusalem and of the national judgments that a Divine retribution had brought upon the Hebrew nation. The prayer, indeed, is profoundly spiritual. and puts the highest interpretation on the facts of past history, as well as on the facts of the prophet's own time. The sin which was confessed was a persistent departure from the Divine law; and that law was identified—not with any ritual worship but—with 'the truth.' And that truth again is referred to as intelligible to man: 'We made not our prayer before the Lord our God that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand Thy truth.' Moreover, the doctrine of sacrifice in any approach to that coarser interpretation which the older prophets had so long denounced, is shut out by an appeal of the most absolute humility: 'For we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousness, but for Thy great mercies.' Yet in the prophet's mind the whole of these supplications are bound up with an actual revival of the glories of the literal Jerusalem: 'Open Thine eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name.'

These are the prophet's personal and national preconceptions. This is the horizon by which his personal and patriotic hopes were bounded. Yet how little do they correspond with the prophetic intimations which he receives, and which he cannot but report. The vision granted to him was not only of the 'bringing in of an everlasting righteousness [1],' but also of a 'sealing up of the vision and of the prophecy'—of some mysterious ending of pre-existing dispensation, and of the opening of a new one under a personal Messiah who is called 'the Prince [2].' But this Messiah, instead of restoring the literal throne of David, was to be 'cut off, but not for himself [3].' Then follow predictions which point to the destruction of Jerusalem, and not to its restoration. Moreover, its once exclusive, and only holy, worship, was to come to an end through the agency of that very Prince who had always been before connected with its greatest glory: 'He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation [4].' It really matters nothing what the precise date of this prophecy may have been, or what the name of the man to whom such a vision was given. It is at least a typical product of the highest religious consciousness of the Hebrew Church. It has, in the highest degree, all those astonishing and unique characteristics which we have traced throughout, and in particular that fulness and mystery of meaning which

[1] Dan. ix. 24.
[2] Dan. ix. 25.
[3] Dan. ix. 26.
[4] Dan. ix. 27.

overflows the images, and seems to strain the containing walls of language. All notions, however deeply rooted, of mere national pride as founded on special Divine favour, are not only broken down, but they are confronted with predictions of complete nationa' ruin, as one of the conditions of a more spiritual, and a much more glorious, kingdom.

Chapter VII.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

CHRIST AS THE MESSIAH. THE NATURE OF SACRIFICE: OF FAITH: OF INSPIRATION: OF REGENERATION.

THE perfect continuity which exists between the fundamental conceptions of Hebrew theology and those of Christian doctrine, has never been, and cannot be, denied. The differences which now separate the Synagogue from the Church, wide and deep as these differences are in some points of view, are all contained within a common and a well-defined boundary of beliefs. These beliefs separate both of them, equally and absolutely, from all other systems of religious thought. It is, indeed, a question of paramount importance whether this world has been already visited by such an One as the Hebrew prophets foreshadowed in their Messiah, or whether He has not come, and is only yet to be expected. But the mere statement of this alternative, which separates Judaism from Christianity, is enough to show how near must be the relationship in thought between those who recognize what has already come to pass, and those who only wait for it. And this near relationship must become nearer still when we dwell

on considerations which are full of suggestion. Let any Christian of our time put to himself the question, and really think it out, how far he can be sure that if he had been a Jew living in Palestine at the commencement of our Lord's Ministry, he would certainly have recognized the Messiah of his race in the Person and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. It is a question which will give him much to think of. We know as a matter of fact that the great majority of the Jews—including His own brethren—failed to do so—that it was only a comparatively few spiritually minded men and women, who could even conceive as possible the identification which seems so easy and so natural to us. We must remember that the Jews of that age had none of many helps which stand us in good stead now, when doubt or misgivings throw us back on the evidences of Christianity. They saw nothing of that slow, but steady, and wide acceptance which gradually flushed the dark skies of a most troubled world with the rising dawn of a great spiritual light. They did not see His teaching accepted to the uttermost ends of a geography of which they did not know even the existence. They did not see the Isles waiting for His law. Even those who had reached the most spiritual conception of the Messiah's reign, must generally have expected it to be inaugurated by some striking outward manifestation which could be seen and read of all men. Nothing could be more absolutely different from that which happened. All that they did see came 'not with observation.' It came in the daily walks, in the daily conversation, and in

a few public addresses, of a Man born of a low estate, and in a town which was one of the least among the thousands of Judah. Even the signs which, they heard, He gave of a superhuman power, were not by any means so significant to them as they would be now to us. Superhuman agencies and powers were to them the most natural of all things. The very idea of what we now thoughtlessly and ignorantly call 'the supernatural' was an idea unknown and logically unintelligible to them. They believed in the existence of a spiritual world underlying all visible things, and they expected it to make itself felt and seen in many ways. They depended therefore, mainly, if not entirely, for the recognition of such a Messiah upon those rare spiritual faculties of the heart and soul, which are, as it were, the retina for catching the finest and purest rays of spiritual truth. It cannot be said with candour on our part, that the predictive utterances even of the greatest prophets, had been clear or unambiguous. On the contrary, they were full of mystery, as of visions dimly seen. Images of a secular and of a spiritual kingdom were inseparably mixed and interwoven in almost all their language. It is quite conceivable, nay, even it is probable, that if the prophets themselves had been confronted with the actual appearing and life of Jesus of Nazareth, they might have failed to see in Him all that they had foreseen and foretold of the Messiah. Between the close of the sacred canon of the principal Hebrew books, under Ezra and Nehemiah, and the Ministry of Christ, there had elapsed the long period of above 400 years, and thus there had been

time for a growing intensification of the poorest secular interpretations. It was only a few individual souls, living in high spiritual communion with the personal God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, who could rise above these interpretations, or could be capable of seeing 'Him who is invisible' in such an unexpected form.

The difficulties, however, which stood in the way of our Lord being recognized as the Messiah by the Jews, do not form part of our special subject here. That subject is not the Christian evidences as an argument, but the fundamental conceptions of Christian theology as a fact. And in this point of view it is of the first importance to remember that there is one of these conceptions which was obviously common to the Jew and to the Christian, and that was the coming, whether past or future, of some One of whom the prophets spoke, and to whom they attributed the various works and functions foreshadowed in so many mysterious intimations. That conception is, indeed, fundamental, inasmuch as it lies at the very root of all Hebrew theology—the conception, namely, that nothing can be done except by the use of some definite and appropriate means. Whether the work of the Messiah was supposed to be the 'restoring again the kingdom to Israel,' or the establishment of a dominion of universal righteousness over the whole world, it was always spoken of as a work only to be done by the coming of a Person specially made strong for doing it. The whole language of Hebrew prophecy, and of Hebrew history, is

full of this conception. Just as we have seen that, in the physical sciences, men are never able to describe fully the commonest facts of Nature without using the words, or the grammatical constructions, which imply the purposiveness of living organs, so in the science of theology, as known to the Jews, they cannot rid themselves of the same underlying necessity of thought. They had an absolute belief, indeed, in the omnipotence of God. But they had also an instinctive belief, quite as absolute, that omnipotence itself was not arbitrary in the exercise of its powers, but worked always through intelligible and moral laws. The selection of themselves, out of all the other families of men, for a special purpose connected with the knowledge and preservation of Divine truth; the raising up of specially adapted leaders; the enactments of a peculiar code of rules regulating Divine worship; the special inspiration of prophets to rebuke, persuade, and teach; the whole national history, in short, from the call of Abraham, and all the predictions of ultimate blessings to the Gentile world, are permeated with the conception of the Divine reign of law, in the dealings of Jehovah with His universe, and with all the creatures of His hand. The predicted coming of some Person to do infinitely more, in the same direction, than any mere leaders or prophets had ever done before, was therefore in perfect harmony with the same conception that every Divine, as well as every human, purpose is attainable only through the employment of some definite instrumentality. The whole group of ideas which were embodied in the

Hebrew expectation of a Messiah, were ideas which were centred in this conception. Who this great coming One was to be, whether human or Divine—what, exactly, was the work he had to do, and by what means it was to be accomplished—all this was shrouded in utterances of a various and splendid imagery. If we read carefully any one of the many passages in both divisions of Isaiah, for example, which are obviously Messianic, we cannot fail to be struck with the universal presence of one characteristic thought, and that is the power of all those well-known laws of our nature which make us most accessible both to intellectual and to moral truth through the instrumentality of our own kind, such as a great teacher, a great character, and a great example. The very first chapter in the earlier Isaiah which is evidently Messianic, is full of this idea in its description of Him who is there called 'a Branch' or 'a Stem' out of the roots of a great Hebrew ancestor. Upon this Descendant of a chosen stock there was to rest 'the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' This Spirit was to make Him 'quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord.' It was to make all His judgments on men and things not superficial but profound, because attained through knowledge of the eternal laws of eternal truth: 'He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes; neither reprove after the hearing of His ears[1].' Absolute justice and equity

[1] Isa. xi. 3.

were to be, in Him, the guides of perfect knowledge. And all this was to be exhibited in some One whose power was to lie—not in arms or even in any coercive authority whatever, but in oral teaching, in proclaiming universal truth, in exhortation, and in reproof: 'He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked [1].'

No imagery could be stronger or clearer than this to describe the nature of the agency that was to appear, and to identify it with one at least of the best known and most powerful influences on the minds and hearts of men, namely, the agency of personal teaching, in sounding forth truths which are far reaching, and full of the self-evidence of an internal light. The later Isaiah adds to this conception that of the attraction of love and gratitude due to suffering voluntarily undergone for the fulfilling of a purpose so beneficent. His language seems to attribute to the inherent and natural efficacy of these means, the world-wide triumph they were destined to achieve. For in immediate connexion with the mysterious description of that servant whose 'visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men,' the prophet adds, 'so shall He sprinkle many nations [2].' The selection of this word 'sprinkle' for the expression of what is here implied, is a striking illustration of the innate tendency of the Hebrew prophetic spirit to employ almost always the symbolic language of the Levitical ritual, but yet also

[1] Isa. xi. 4. [2] Isa. lii. 14, 15.

always to employ it in such a way as to explain it in terms of the spiritual realities which are symbolized. The sprinkling of animal blood over the altar was a conspicuous feature in the worship of the temple [1]. Ezekiel uses it as applicable to mere cleansing by the use of water [2]. Isaiah here uses it for the great reality of the attractive power which was to be exerted over the whole world by the doctrines of One who was to endure exceptional suffering in the proclamation of them. The voluntary endurance of that suffering for so Divine a purpose, is an idea inseparably interwoven with the whole language of the later Isaiah in his vision of the Messianic work. The existence, therefore, of some necessary relation between the means and the end in view, is an inevitable implication. It has, indeed, always been involved equally in the practice and doctrine of sacrifice in all its forms, whether in the horrible sacrifices of the heathen, such as those to Moloch, or in the more innocent, yet still coarse and carnal, sacrifices of the Jewish temple, or in the high spiritual conceptions of it which were so constantly insisted upon by the Hebrew prophets. It is expressly emphasized in the language of the later Isaiah in his description of what the Messiah was to do. It is seen as the result, not only of effort, of labour, and of sorrow, but of that supreme and proverbial agony which is known as travail: 'He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied [3].' Even in that lowest sense of all in which the word sacrifice has come to be commonly used in the affairs

[1] Lev. xvi, xvii. [2] Ezek. xxxvi. 25. [3] Isa. liii. 11.

of life—the sense of mere purchase—the giving up of something that is valuable to us in order to obtain something else which we are still more anxious to obtain—even in this sense the same implication is involved.

We must not, however, allow our familiarity with this essential element in the very idea of sacrifice, to blind us to the mystery it involves when applied to the agency of the Godhead in doing anything, or in securing any end. It seems to us as if it implied some limit on omnipotence, some inherent need, such as we ourselves are under, to proceed always in the compassing of any purpose, upon some plan of operation in which natural laws can only be made subordinate by homage being paid to their inalienable and insuperable powers. We have seen that this need is a universal and conspicuous fact in Nature, and it is of infinite interest to observe how the theology of the Hebrews recognized it in all their beliefs concerning the Author of Nature, and how their greatest prophets recognized it, specially, in all their conceptions of what the Messiah was to be, and of what He was to do. Why it could not be done otherwise, and especially at less cost, when nevertheless it is spoken of as desired and aimed at by Jehovah—this is the question which seems to present to us an insuperable difficulty. Well might the prophet interrupt his vision by the exclamation, 'Who hath believed our report[1]?' There is only one conception which even tends towards a solution of this

[1] Isa. liii.

difficulty, and that is the conception that what we call natural laws, both in the physical and in the moral world, are indeed Divine, owing their origin and all their unchangeable authority to some inseparable relation to the character of the Almighty, as the issue of His will, of His righteousness, and of His truth.

Difficult as it may be to realize this conception, there is no other so full of an inexhaustible suggestiveness. It gives a clue to the intense interest which the human intellect finds in even the minutest detail of the physical sciences, whilst it gives a still more adequate explanation of the solemn and satisfying joys of a genuine religious faith. It represents the objects of that faith not as things of mere sentimental feeling, but as things of fact, in the ascertainment or recognition of which the faculties of our reason have an important part to play. And more than this, it is a conception which is a guide as well as an encouragement to reason, because it supplies us with at least one test of truth in religious creeds, namely, the conformity of their tenets to all other truths which are discoverable in the universe of God. No mere idol of the mind, graven, as it were, by art and man's device—no mere formal dogma not in harmony with the pervading realities of the spiritual world—can long stand this test; whilst, on the other hand, every article of our creeds which does stand it, however beset it may be with intellectual difficulties due to our knowledge being so limited, will survive all attacks, and become more and more established

in that reasonable confidence which rises into the assurances of faith.

It is, therefore, of infinite moment to observe that the theology of the Christian Church, is built upon this conception of the universal reign of law, if not more extensively, yet at least more consciously and avowedly, than the theology of the Hebrews. Judaism, indeed, involved it, but Christianity openly proclaims it, dwells upon it, and embodies it in beliefs which carry it to an extent that constituted the great difficulty of the Jews in accepting it. Their own prophets had, indeed, given to their Messiah such names and titles as are not conceivably applicable to any mere man. 'Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace[1]'—these are appellations which might well indicate any conceivable representation of Jehovah. And in some Jewish writings, which, indeed, were not part of the canon, because they were written after that canon had been closed—to those titles had been added, the Son of Man, the Son of God, and even the Only Begotten Son of God. This last appellation, indeed, was obviously borrowed from the second Psalm[2]. The degradation of Israel under pagan oppressors, and the temporary triumph of the chosen people in the Maccabean period, gave rise to a copious apocalyptic literature 'in which a conquering Messiah was vividly revived[3].' In them the old prophetic titles received a new development, and the Son of

[1] Isa. ix. 6. [2] Ps. ii. 7.

[3] Deane's *Pseudographia*, Introd. p. 31.

David was described as 'Christ the Lord'; and this last expression seems certainly to have been known before Christian times[1]. This, indeed, is clear from the narrative of our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria, whose words even imply a more spiritual understanding of the Messianic character than most of the literary references: 'I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things[2].' But still, none of these titles seem to have been connected in the Hebrew mind with that full participation in the Godhead which was claimed by Christians for their Christ. The idea that such a Being could only achieve a deliberate purpose of the Almighty through the sacrifice of Himself, was, not unnaturally, inconceivable to the Jews. Yet the apostles of Jesus of Nazareth, all of them Jews, not only accepted this idea, but dwelt upon it with emphasis and in detail, as affording a rational basis for their creed. They claimed a full humanity for Him in whose Messiahship they had come to believe, as if that humanity were an indispensable qualification for His work. They not only narrate as facts, but they love to dwell as a comfort, on His human childhood, on His human nurture, on His human subjection to parents, on His human growth in all the graces of character which gave Him increasing wisdom and increasing favour with God and man[3]. They tell us of His early acquaintance with the sacred Scriptures of His race, and

[1] Deane's *Pseudographia*, Introd. p. 17.

[2] John iv. 25.

[3] Luke ii. 46–52.

of that spiritual discernment of their import which enabled Him to meet and astonish the professional theologians who disputed in the temple. They tell us of an interrogation put to Him at a very early age as to the causes of His absence from His family, and of His mysterious reply, 'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business[1],' which implies a conscious preparation or apprenticeship for His still distant public ministry. And all this human history the evangelists record in connexion with an argument which is turned to great account by the Apostles as affording a reasonable explanation of the pre-eminent fitness of their Master for the discharge of His Messianic office.

There is one book and only one in the New Testament—the Epistle to the Hebrews—which is specially devoted to demonstrate the perfect continuity of doctrine between Hebrew and Christian theology, and that book is the one which is more full than any other of the idea that both theologies are one, in recognizing the reign of immutable and eternal laws, and that the doctrines of both are largely susceptible of reasonable explanation by reference to the facts of Nature as known to us by observation and experience. Although this epistle is anonymous, and differences of opinion exist as to who the author was, he is certainly one of the very greatest among the sacred writers, and it is impossible not to be struck with the internal evidence which connects it, directly or indirectly, with the powerful and subtle intellect of St. Paul. But whoever he may have been, his great

[1] Luke ii. 49.

argument is of the highest authority on the relations of Judaism to Christianity, and on the relations of both theologies to natural facts and laws in the spiritual world. He specially devotes himself to the explanation to Jews of the Christian belief in respect to the nature and work of the Messiah, and in the identification of that great predicted Person with the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. In the conduct of this argument he gives explanations of the Messianic functions which are largely founded on an appeal to reason, and to familiar knowledge of natural causes and effects. In particular, he specially recommends the idea of a perfectly human Messiahship by its manifest adaptation to the securing of human confidence and love. In Jesus, he says, 'We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin[1].'

Nothing can be more emphatic or explicit than the doctrine of this great writer, that not only the humanity of Christ, but His suffering life on earth, was a needed preparation for His work, and a special ground of hope and confidence in those who look to Him; 'for it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering[2].' The same argument is pursued through many verses, and is applied to the power of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, as events specially adapted to meet the worst evils and

[1] Heb. iv. 15. [2] Heb. ii. 10.

distresses of the world. One of these distresses, particularly mentioned here, is a striking confirmation of a curious passage in the Latin poet Lucretius, which attributes the baneful influence of religious superstition on the morals and happiness of man, to the universal fear of death coupled with dark imaginings on the conditions of an unknown immortality [1]. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews confirms this passage to the letter. He speaks of this prevailing fear as a well-known fact, and as an evil for which the human life and death and resurrection of Him who was indeed the promised Christ, was the only, as it was the natural and appointed, remedy. He gives it as a reason for the Incarnation, that it would work out a deliverance from this master evil of false religions; 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He himself also took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death had all their lifetime been subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins

[1] See the first ninety-four lines in the third book, which are devoted to this subject, enumerating many of the miseries and crimes and follies of human life, and saying of them:

'Haec vulnèra vitae
Non minimam partem mortis formidine aluntur.'

Munro's *Lucretius*, vol. i. p. 107.

of the people.' The whole structure of these sentences is charged with the idea of an obvious and special adaptation of unusual means for the attainment of a difficult result. Then comes the climax of the argument which appeals to our intelligible and natural reason for the perfect humanity of the Messiah, 'For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted [1].'

No language could be more emphatic than this in its appeal to human reason, as having the highest functions to discharge in the recognition of religious truth, and especially in that particular truth which was the one great central belief of Christianity, namely, the instrumentality of a personal Messiah qualified to reveal Divine things as they had never been revealed before, and qualified especially to give confidence to men in His character, as well as in His power. In the recorded utterances of Jesus Christ himself there are few which run on this line of thought. But there is one of a most remarkable kind which clearly does so: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me [2].' An appeal to human reason must of necessity be an appeal to natural laws of well-known, or at least of recognizable, authority in the experience of human life. It must assume these to be supreme, and it must assume that conformity with them is characteristic of all truth, and is, in itself, that which can alone constitute to us a reasonable explanation. The whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews is full of this idea. It opens with

[1] Heb. ii. 14–18. [2] John xii. 32.

a reference to the historical fact that Jehovah had in the past at sundry times, and in diverse manners, spoken to their fathers through the prophets, but had now spoken to themselves by His Son, whom the writer describes as 'the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person[1].'

On this branch of his subject, however, namely, the full Divinity which he claimed for Jesus of Nazareth, it is remarkable that the author of Hebrews does not rest on any appeal to reason, but exclusively on an appeal to prophetic utterances which were of acknowledged authority among the Jews. He does, indeed, appeal to reason in respect to the only possible interpretation which these utterances could bear in their delineations of the rank and character of Him whose advent had been the constant theme of prophecy and of song. He argues that these utterances pointed clearly to One who was to have that kind of close relationship to the Godhead which is best translated to us as Sonship. But beyond this his reasoning does not go. It is a sustained argument on the direct or implied meaning of many passages which he quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures, showing how impossible it is that those passages can have applied to a mere man, and how the whole atmosphere of their mysterious intimations is charged with the conception of some Divine Being who was to come for the accomplishment of many purposes not otherwise to be attained, or by any agency of lower rank or power. In this argument the Apostle was addressing himself to Jews,

[1] Heb. i. 3.

who knew that the language thus quoted had always been accepted as referring to the Messiah, and it is an argument which we can all re-enforce for ourselves by comparing and scrutinizing innumerable other passages in the Prophets and in the Psalms. But it is not an argument which could have any power over men to whom the Jewish Scriptures were unknown, or by whom they were not accepted as of any authority in matters of religion. It is not an argument addressed to the universal reason of mankind on the merits of the Christian conception in itself. The Apostle knew too well the limitations on that reason which render it incapable of forming any such independent judgment on the nature of the Godhead, as to be able to decide what could, or what could not be possible, in its modes of manifestation. On this side, therefore, of his subject, namely, the possibility of a Divine Messiah, he stands not upon reason, but upon authority, and on that wise and true agnosticism which is conscious that on the possibility of a Divine Incarnation we can have nothing else than authority to stand upon. It is only when he comes to deal with the full humanity of the Christ that he appeals to reason as capable of recognizing means well adapted to meet the wants and weaknesses of our nature. It is in this sense only that we can interpret the language of the Apostle when—in the passages above quoted and in others—he pushes so far the principle of reasonable explanations as almost seemingly to imply that the Creator could not fully understand the creatures He had made, except by sending One who was His Son

to go through the actual experience of a human life. This interpretation, of course, cannot have been intended. What is meant clearly is that our own confidence and faith in a Divine sympathy is made easier to us by the human life of a Divine Person. The words, if taken in any other sense, are incompatible with the language of the old Hebrew Scriptures in respect to the character of Jehovah—language used quite irrespective of any reference to the advent of the coming One. There is no reason to suppose that the Singer of Israel was thinking of a human Messiah when he wrote the 103rd Psalm, which ascribes a character of such exquisite tenderness to the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, in all His dealings with their children as the chosen representatives of mankind:—'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust[1].' Again, in the 130th Psalm, we read, 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared[2].' Again, in the 139th Psalm, we have the most absolute assertion of the perfect knowledge of the Most High concerning the most intimate secrets of humanity:—'O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off,' &c. Undoubtedly, therefore, perfect knowledge of, and perfect tenderness towards men, on the part of Jehovah, was an idea fully grasped by the sacred writers of the Hebrews.

[1] Ps. ciii. 13, 14. [2] Ps. cxxx. 3, 4.

Nevertheless it remains true that it is most difficult for men to keep up this conception of Jehovah, and to realize it—as compared with the facility with which they can conceive and remember the sympathy of One who has led a human life, and was Himself 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.'

All this is most certainly true. It has been the actual experience of millions of men during the last 2000 years. It has been one of the strengths of Christianity. It is in complete consonance with well-known laws of our human nature, and in appealing to them as familiar to human experience, the author of the Book of Hebrews does what he obviously meant to do—he gives a reasonable account of the central conception of Christianity, which could be recognized as such, not by Jews only but by all mankind. But in the very reasonableness of that account he plants his foot firmly on the idea that the whole system of Christian belief rests on its conformity to the natural laws of one universal spiritual kingdom. It is in the light of this idea that he insists on the Divinity of Jesus of Nazareth as in no way hindering the application to Him of the spiritual means by which human souls are prepared and disciplined in Divine knowledge, and in the acquisition of a Divine character:—'Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him[1].'

[1] Heb. v. 8, 9.

Then, although it is true, as we have said, that the writer of this appeal to the Hebrew people, rests it on the authority of their own Scriptures so far as all conceptions of the Godhead are concerned, and although he rests it upon reasoning, only so far as those Scriptures could be clearly shown to contemplate a human character as belonging to the Messiah, yet it is to be observed that he selects out of the Hebrew books those words and passages which do in themselves suggest that we have a clue to the relation between the human and the Divine, which affords, within limits indeed, but still effectively, some rational explanation of the nature of the Godhead. He claims for Jesus of Nazareth, not only that relationship to Jehovah which was familiar to the Jews as connected with the Messiah in the title of Sonship, but also that still older relationship which was equally familiar to them as connected with the first progenitor of the whole human race in the narrative of Genesis. One of the most striking parts of that narrative is the declaration that Adam was created in the image of God, and after His likeness. This fundamental ascription to man of a share in the Divine Nature, had never been so grossly interpreted by the Hebrews as to apply it to the bodily frame of man, and the revolt from any such interpretation was the animating sentiment which inflamed that hatred and horror of idolatry, in any form, which was embodied in the Commandments, and is so continually reiterated by the sacred writers. But they did interpret it as applying to the plan and structure of the mind of man as it came from the hands of his

Creator, and before, through the disobedience of a free will, it had been corrupted. When, therefore, the writer of the Book of Hebrews describes Him whom Christians identified with the Messiah, as not only a Son, but as the Son of God who was 'the express image of His Person,' he used an expression which need not have startled any Jew. The most ancient and sacred record of their race had expressly used it as the word best fitted to convey the true relationship which existed between the Creator and the highest creature He had made on earth. Nor need it now startle any thinker among the Gentiles, because it is at this point in the theology of the Hebrews that its fundamental conceptions rest securely on the recognition of undoubted facts, which involve no less than the same idea. If our intellects and hearts were not, in some real sense, made in the image and after the likeness of God, we could not possibly delight as we do in the decipherment of God's works, nor be conscious of the order, harmony, and intelligibility, of the laws by which they are produced and governed. And hence in this appeal to Judaism the Apostle does also, in this high matter, make an appeal to the universal reason of mankind, and to that purposiveness in the system of Nature which we have identified as self-evidently true. The conceivability of a special Incarnation appears in a new light to those to whom the idea has come really home that all men are, in their origin, sons of God and partakers of the Divine Nature. Certain it is that Jesus Christ did not try to make this conception more difficult to

those whom He addressed when He spoke of Himself. On the contrary, in order to make the conception easier, he appealed to this very fact, namely, the analogy of language used in the Hebrew Scriptures as applicable to human recipients of Divine missions and inspirations: 'If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken; say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, He blasphemeth, because I said, I am the Son of God[1].'

Analogies are not identities, and when analogies are used, as in this case, for the mere purposes of illustration, they may well be distant and imperfect. There is, accordingly, a vast space between that relation to the Godhead which belonged even to the greatest prophets 'to whom the word of God came,' and that other relationship which Jesus Christ always claimed for Himself, and which St. John expressed by describing Him as 'the Word,' who became incarnate, and who, in virtue of this embodiment, was both Son of Man and Son of God. But the illustration was enough to remind the Jews how the language of their own sacred books was full of conceptions concerning the Divine Nature in its relation to man, which ought to facilitate their acceptance of a human and yet a Divine Messiah. St. Paul's doctrine that the bodies of men are to be regarded as 'temples of the Holy Ghost[2],' and that 'in the Creator we live and move and have our being[3],' is a doctrine having the same power of rendering more easily conceivable the

[1] John x. 35, 36. [2] 2 Cor vi. 16. [3] Acts xvii. 28.

same idea; whilst the intuitive and direct perception of one universal Mind as omnipresent in that system of things to which we ourselves belong, comes in, again and again, with its own special power to remind us continually of the unfathomable mysteries by which we are surrounded, and through which we can see the boundless possibilities of our own nature in its relations with the Divine.

But this is not the only matter on which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews throws a clear light on the perfect continuity between Hebrew and Christian theology, and on both these theologies as appealing to some power in human reason to recognize Divine truth. Inseparably connected with the true relations between the Godhead and humanity, lies the great question of the nature of true and acceptable worship. And with this, again, is inseparably connected the world-old practices of sacrifice. The Christian Apostle adopts and enlarges on the fundamental idea of all the Hebrew prophets, that man has absolutely nothing that he can really give to God except the obedience of a free will, and the affections of a free heart. In addressing the Hebrews he naturally uses the language of their authorized temple-worship, and points out as a fact that in that worship the bloody sacrifices of beasts were so essential an ingredient that it could be said of it with truth that 'almost all things were by the law purged by blood,' and that 'without shedding of blood there was no remission[1].' But not less emphatically does

[1] Heb. ix. 22.

he go on to say, not as a mere opinion, or as a mere fact, but as if it were a self-evident proposition, 'For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin[1].' And so through a long series of parallels and of contrasts between the mere symbolic sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood and the only kind of sacrifice which can be thought of as acceptable to God, he labours to exalt the work and mission of the Messiah to the level of that highest spiritual reason and consciousness of men which had so often been appealed to by the prophets of Israel. For this purpose he dwells on one of the most obscure historical personages named in the Hebrew Scriptures, Melchisedec, but one who most clearly was spoken of in the Psalms in connexion with the character of priesthood in the promised Messiah: 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec[2].' Whatever may be the mystery which attaches to the name of this obscure but grand personality in Jewish history, this passage concerning him was a clear prediction of some new order or kind of priesthood, other and higher than that of Aaron. But if there was to be a change in the priesthood, there was to be 'of necessity a change also of the law.' The new priesthood was one to be conferred not 'after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.' And the old law or commandment which had been administered by the Levites was disannulled 'for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.' Then of the new priest-

[1] Heb. x. 4. [2] Ps. cx. 4.

hood of the Messiah, at once human and Divine, he gives the reasonable explanation that in virtue of 'His endless life' He has entered within the veil, and has received an unchangeable priesthood whereby 'He is able also to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.' It is in this connexion that he again appeals to the human reason as capable, at least in some measure, of understanding how and why it was that a life of personal holiness in the face of all temptations was a needed qualification for such an office, and for our own confidence in Him to whom it was assigned: 'For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens[1].'

Thus, again and again, in the conduct of this great argument addressed to Jews, the Apostle uses language which implies that the old prophetic interpretation of the true nature of sacrifice, was an interpretation enforced by due consideration of the very nature and possibility of things. He insists that the Levitical sacrifices were essentially figurative and temporary, things for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that did not 'make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience,' seeing that they 'stood only in meats and drinks and diverse washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them till the time of reformation[2].' Here we see that, on the one hand, the practical effect of any worship on the spiritual character and

[1] Heb. vii. 27. [2] Heb. ix. 9, 10.

conscience of men, is made the test of its conformity with truth, whilst on the other hand the impossibility of any such effect being produced by formal gifts to the Almighty, and by ordinances which are merely 'carnal' is assumed to be obvious to the enlightened reason. Then, again, we have the same reasoning enforced by the farther explanation of the effect which the contrasted sacrifice of the Messiah is adapted to produce. That effect was to be nothing outward—not even a mere 'purifying of the flesh.' It was to change the heart and life. It was to cast out the alien conception that the mere doing of outward things, which had in them no spiritual life, could have spiritual value. It was to 'purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God[1].' Nor does the apostle fail to impress upon the Jews what it was, in the Messiah's sacrifice, which was to be thus substituted for the blood of animals. It was not to be the mere substitution of the blood of a man for the blood of beasts. It was not to be a return to the idea of human sacrifices which were only too common among the heathen. On the nature of the Messianic sacrifice he refers them to the language of the fortieth Psalm, in which the carnal sacrifices of the temple are placed in sharp contrast with the spiritual offering of a soul listening to the Divine voice: 'Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened[2].' And this hearing was to be effective, for the contrast is pursued: 'Burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume

[1] Heb. ix. 14. [2] Ps. xl. 6–10.

of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, oh my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart.' Nor was true sacrifice limited to Himself. He was to become the proclaimer of it to the world: 'I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart; I have not concealed Thy loving-kindness and Thy truth from the great congregation.' This is the Psalm, out of their own most sacred Scriptures, to which the Apostle refers the Jews as setting forth the true idea of the Messianic sacrifice; and having put the two ideas in opposition—the idea of a bloody immolation and the idea of doing of the Divine will—he adds emphatically, 'He taketh away the first that He may establish the second [1].' This is the spiritual meaning which he gives to the 'offering of the body of Christ once for all'—an offering, he adds, which is effective only for those whose character is changed by it: 'for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified [2].'

It cannot, indeed, be maintained, nor is it even suggested here, that these explanations of the Apostle concerning the true nature of the sacrifice rendered by the Messiah, are explanations which solve the deeper speculative difficulties which beset the subject. They do not. They do not abate our wonder, or curiosity, how it is that all the great effects attributed to it on the characters of men, and on the acceptability of their worship by God, could not have been secured at less cost, or without any cost beyond some

[1] Heb. x. 9. [2] Heb. x. 14.

omnipotent exercise of the Divine will. But the very nature of this question is in itself a conclusive proof that conformity to some laws deeply seated in the very nature of things, is the underlying difficulty with which we have to deal, and that the absolute necessity and authority of eternal laws, is an idea inseparable from the whole system both of Hebrew and Christian theology. It is the exclusion of any purely arbitrary element in the conduct of the Divine government, that is so striking in all these arguments and explanations. Some of them are addressed simply to the Jews as such, to show the conformity of the Christian belief with the uniform language of their own law-givers and prophets. But another part of those arguments and explanations are directed to the moral and spiritual conscience, or reason, of mankind. The uselessness of mere empty forms in Divine worship, the virtue which lies in the devotion of loving and faithful hearts, the dependence of all goodness, in deeds or works, upon the motive with which they are done, the attractive power of a great personal character, of the example of a holy life, and of self-sacrifice for the sake of others—all these are conceptions reasonable in themselves, and recognizable as true by the universal human conscience. Why the gracious purposes of God to man could apparently only be attained by the employment of such means as the Incarnation and self-sacrifice of One so much part of the Godhead as to be called His Son, this may indeed be an intellectual, but it is not a moral, difficulty. It contains no element of offence

against the attributes which we instinctively attach to the Divine nature. It does not represent God as gratified by the mere sight of blood, or by the contemplation of mere death and suffering. Neither does it represent Him as propitiated by the pretended gift to Him of things which were already all His own.

It is no part of the object of this work to pronounce, or even to indicate, opinions on any of the points of doctrine which are in dispute between different sections of the Christian Church. It is, on the contrary, my object to avoid them. The aim here is to deal with the conceptions of Christian theology as facts, in order to show their connexion with the idea of natural laws as prevailing in the spiritual, as well as in what is called the material, world. But in the pursuit of this aim it is absolutely necessary to point out that it is quite possible so to express and explain the Christian doctrine of sacrifice, as to involve, and even intensify, all the gross and carnal conceptions concerning it, which were the constant theme of denunciation by the Hebrew prophets. If our rendering of anything to God is in the nature merely of the paying of a debt, then, nothing can be more certain than that in human affairs the discharge of such an obligation is entirely independent of the character of him who owed it, or of the spirit and disposition with which he pays it. This is certainly not the teaching of Christian theology in respect to the sacrifice of Christ. It satisfies no natural law traceable in the spiritual world. On the contrary, nothing can be more repugnant to our moral sense than the notion that we can by any mere

outward payment, discharge any obligation lying in the region of gratitude and love. Yet I once heard from a Christian pulpit, more than half a century ago, the nature and effect of the sacrifice of Christ likened to the two sides—the debit and credit sides—of a commercial ledger. The debt of humanity was paid off—we were told—by a payment to account on the credit side, in the blood and death of Christ. This kind of language is hardly ever used now, and probably even then the preacher, if he had been questioned, would have admitted that the elements of spiritual change, demanded in the mind and heart of the Christian debtor, were absolutely left out of account in that image of a pecuniary transaction which he presented to his hearers as explaining the Cross of Calvary in its relation to sinners and to sin. The language of the New Testament writers on this subject must be taken as a whole, and not interpreted from individual passages. For just as the Hebrew prophets, as we have seen, constantly used the imagery of the temple worship even in their loftiest spiritual teaching of the fundamental laws of eternal righteousness and truth, so did the Christian Apostles in their explanations of Christian doctrine. But this use of the Levitical imagery, was not less constantly illuminated by translations into language appealing to the highest moral consciousness of man as capable of appreciating the spiritual truths which lay behind, and beyond, the images and the forms. St. Paul in his speech to the Athenians on Mars Hill adopts and enforces the old reasonable argument of

the Hebrew prophets on the absurdity of supposing that, in sacrifice, man can possibly give to God anything external that is not his own to give: 'Neither is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing,' as an admitted and self-evident truth, 'that He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things [1].' Very often, too, the language in which such appeals are conveyed to our human spiritual reason, in condemnation of formal or mechanical understandings of Christian doctrine, and in the inculcation of substituted realities, is language so full, and so lofty, as to cover applications which, because of the limitations on our knowledge, are evidently inexhaustible by us. Such, for example, is the profound antithesis used by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in reference to that distant and obscure priesthood of Melchisedec, 'after the similitude' of which the new priesthood of Christ was to be understood, 'not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life [2].'

Next in importance in the system of Christian theology to the true doctrine of sacrifice, if indeed it be separable at all, comes the true doctrine of Christian faith. Faith in the language of the New Testament is not mere intellectual conviction. This is, indeed—it should never be forgotten—an included and a necessary element, but not the element which determines its character and constitutes its virtue. There can, of course, be no faith without some intellectual convictions; but there are a thousand

[1] Acts xvii. 25. [2] Heb. vii. 16.

mere intellectual convictions where there is nothing in the nature of faith. There is no moral element, for example, in the conviction we have that things equal to the same thing are equal to one another. We cannot help ourselves in entertaining this conviction. It is to us a mere necessity of thought, the result of those innate or inspired adaptations of our brain power to external facts and laws, which are given to us as necessary parts of the machinery of our intelligence. In like manner there are facts in the spiritual world which may be revealed to our reason as indisputable, and yet our convictions of them may have no moral character whatever. St. James speaks with severity of those who confound these intellectual convictions on any subject with Christian faith. Not even on subjects belonging to religious belief had this kind of conviction any ethical value: 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble[1].' But in faith there is a moral element according to Christian theology. It declares—as if it were a consequence of the very nature of God—that 'without faith it is impossible to please Him[2].' And in the sequel of this sentence the Apostle gives a rational explanation of the nature of that moral element which is pleasing in His sight. It is the element which concerns, not the mere existence of God, but His character. The true relation between the purely intellectual, and the moral, elements in faith, is set forth in the most strictly reasoning form: 'for he that cometh to God must

[1] Jas. ii. 19. [2] Heb. xi. 6.

believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.' No argument can be more logical than this—more tightly compacted in the texture of a natural and a reasonable sequence. The mere conviction of the existence of God as a living God, that is to say as a personal God, may be purely intellectual, and destitute of any moral character; but the farther conviction that He has a moral character, and that in the manifestation of that character He delights to 'reward those who diligently seek Him,'—this is a moral conviction—is in the nature of that kind of belief which constitutes faith—and is alone well pleasing in His sight.

Faith, as defined in Christian theology, does not stand in any necessary contrast to mere intellectual doubt, any more than it stands in any necessary harmony with mere intellectual conviction. Tennyson's famous lines are strictly true:—

> 'There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds.'

But the whole truth of those lines depends on a just interpretation of the word 'honest.' Doubt may be well or ill directed. It may arise, for example, from the rebellion of the moral sense against such teaching in respect to the sacrifice of Christ as likens it to a payment to account on the credit side of a commercial ledger. It may arise from the revolt either of the intellect or the conscience against many other doctrines of a similar kind. It may, therefore, be full of that splendid faith which holds to the conviction that as all true religious conceptions are parts of one

wide system of eternal truth, they must be all in harmony with each other—that some of these may be with certainty felt and known—that some of them, therefore, may be employed to confirm, on the one hand, or to discredit, on the other, dogmas which have come down unquestioned from tradition, or have grown up by insensible accretions from the use of metaphorical language in the controversies of the Church. Christian theology does not teach that faith consists in the easy and thoughtless acceptance of everything that may be presented to us as a religious truth. Even in the golden age of Christianity, when there were living survivors of those who had walked and talked with Christ, or of those who, like Paul of Tarsus, had been converted to His discipleship by overwhelming personal revelations—even then one of them could say, 'There are many false prophets gone out into the world,' and Christians were expressly told to 'try the spirits' that might speak to them to see 'whether they were of God[1].' This questioning operation of the reason, was no departure from the spirit of faith, but, on the contrary, an active exercise of its characteristic character. It was a faithful, and not a faithless, thing to do. It showed a confidence in the existence, and knowability, of truth as an objective reality in Divine things.

We cannot fail to recognize the power and the grandeur of the definition which the Epistle to the Hebrews gives of what is meant by faith in the Christian system. It is the 'substance of things

[1] 1 John iv. 1.

hoped for, the evidence of things not seen[1].' It is, therefore, that which, by virtue of the most deep-seated of natural laws, gives reality to all spiritual conceptions whether as regards the future hopes and aspirations of men, or as regards their sense of certainty in purely intellectual knowledge. It is quite as true in the sphere of the physical sciences as it is in the sphere of religion and philosophy, that the things which are seen are temporal, and that it is only the things which are not seen that are eternal. When therefore men act on the 'evidence of things not seen' they act 'as seeing Him who is invisible.' And this is faith. In its own nature it is the strongest power on earth in its influence on men. It is the secret of all success in the highest walks of human life. The noble list which is given, in the eleventh chapter of the epistle, of the saints and heroes of the Jewish history in whose lives and deaths the power of faith was best exemplified, is a list including great varieties of action and of circumstance. Yet it is remarkable that this list begins by including as a conception in the nature of faith, one idea or conviction which belongs essentially to the sphere of science or philosophy—the conviction, namely, that the visible creation has been made out of things which are invisible—that the world, as we see it, is a world of phenomena—that these phenomena are the result of causes and agencies which lie beneath and behind all its forms. It is by confidence, as we have seen, in our own direct perceptions that we grasp the conviction that these agencies must consist in the

[1] Heb. xi. 1.

nature of a Personal Mind, or, in other words, in the nature of a Divine Creator. And this conviction is represented as rising into faith, because it has in it that moral element which is inseparable from the idea, however feeble, of a personal recognition on our part of a Divine Personality related to our own: 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear[1].' All the other examples of that faith given by the Apostle have reference to its power over the conduct of men in nerving them for great deeds, or in guiding them in great emergencies, or in comforting them with hopes otherwise beyond the bounds of expectation, or in strengthening them to resist great temptations, or in arming them for military conquests, or in breathing into them an invincible courage in witnessing to eternal truth. Patriarchs, and prophets, and kings, and statesmen, and soldiers and women in abundance—are all included in this grand enumeration of those in whom intense moral convictions have been transfigured into faith. There can be no doubt whatever as to the high rank which this power takes among the natural laws that determine human character and conduct. Not, indeed, languid impressions or beliefs, nor things so mechanically evident that we cannot choose but know them to be facts—not these,—but all persuasions so strong as to be earnest and abiding, have not only great power over human conduct, but they habitually control it. They incite men to great deeds. They inspire men

[1] Heb. xi. 3.

with great conceptions. Even when there is little or no moral element present in them, they have their effects none the less. All great men have been men of intense convictions of some kind or another. Nor can we fail to see that the whole grandeur of a great life, together with the value and the permanence of all its deeds, must be related to the truth and dignity of the conceptions by which it is inspired. If men believe, however intensely, in things not true—in idols of their own hands, or in idols of their own imagination—their works will not stand the test of time, or rather of the eternal laws which work in time. It is in direct proportion to the conformity of our beliefs with these laws, that human conduct of any kind can be righteous or successful. This is not only the teaching both of Hebrew and Christian theology, but it is the root idea of their whole language. They uniformly represent the objects of religious faith and worship as not only realities, but as the only, as well as the supreme, realities of the universe; and they consequently regard truth in the apprehension of them as of corresponding importance, both in the sphere of the intellect and the heart. In a system of things which has but one living cause—one author, one creating and inspiring Spirit—it cannot be a matter of indifference what we believe concerning any part of it, seeing that every error must be liable to run out along a thousand lines of related and vitiated thought. This is the meaning of those constant reiterations in the Psalms which identify the Law of God with the pure abstract conception of the Truth: 'Thy Law is the Truth.' And this is the

meaning of the great utterances of Christ: 'God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth': whilst the highest hope and promise which He gives to the Church on earth is 'to be guided into all truth[1].'

It is quite true that among the conceptions of Christian belief, there are some which we are expected to accept on authority alone, and not on any internal light which our mental powers are capable of recognizing as belonging to the sphere of natural or necessary truth. But there are two observations to be made as regards those conceptions — one respecting their own nature, and the other respecting the nature of what is called authority in general. As regards the nature of such conceptions in themselves, they all lie in a region which our own consciousness tells us is absolutely inaccessible to any knowledge of our own depending upon reason. Such, for example, are the conceptions of Christian theology on what are called the 'Persons of the Godhead,' and on their mutual relations to each other, and to that unity with which they are always nevertheless represented as compatible. The possibility of our entertaining such conceptions does not, and cannot, depend on the insuperable difficulties presented by them to our speculative reason. Similar and equal difficulties beset us in every subject of thought and of investigation, even in the physical world—in none of which do we ever reach, by reason, any knowledge whatever on the ultimate nature of things. And especially

[1] John xvi. 13.

in our own personality do we encounter similar and equally insuperable difficulties affecting even the most familiar of our conceptions—conceptions which indeed we clothe in words, and handle as if we understood them, but which, when cross-examined by our speculative intellect, are at once felt to be incomprehensible. The nature of the connexion between our bodies and our minds, and souls, and spirits—or even between the different faculties into which we can divide our one intellectual nature—all this is a region of the darkest night to us. To this category must naturally and pre-eminently belong all conceptions presented to us on the nature of the Godhead. This, consequently, is the region of that true and legitimate agnosticism which rests upon a most rational humility, telling us that it is very reasonable that in religion, as even in science, we should be content, as regards many ultimate conceptions, to rest upon something in the nature of authority.

But here, be it remembered, we return to a domain in which our reasoning faculties have a very high function to discharge. The discrimination between true and false authorities, may be the most important work which our reason is ever called upon to discharge. In the so-called physical sciences, and especially in biology which is highly metaphysical, the authority on which we accept numberless most difficult and obscure conceptions, is simply the authority of ascertained facts which can only bear certain interpretations. And a similar basis exists for authority in religion. We have seen how the facts

of Nature are the authority, by direct perception, for the primary truth of a personal God. The existence of some necessary relations with our own personality, follows as a necessary consequence, whilst the self-revealing truths taught by the Hebrew and Christian theologies, indicate with clearness how close these relations were in the case, above all, of Jesus Christ himself—of the Jewish prophets, and of the Christian apostles. Their obvious knowledge of spiritual things, their profound intimations respecting them, where we can recognize the truth and beauty of their conceptions—these are a reasonable guarantee for their authority in other conceptions which are related, but in respect to which we are as ignorant and as helpless as we often are in science. The sacred writers in the New Testament do indeed recognize our human reason as in itself a legitimate authority to the full extent to which our own consciousness would lead us to trust to its possession of adequate data and powers. There is a memorable example of this in St. Paul's speech to the Athenians on Mars Hill. The whole tenor of that speech is an address to the reason of men founded on sentiments and convictions which had been reached by the pagan world concerning the nature of the Godhead in some, at least, of its relations to humanity. One of these convictions was that in some real sense 'we are the offspring of God': and St. Paul's argument is that if this be so, then it follows that the elevation of our nature above the level of mere material things, or of any work done in material things by our own hands, ought to save us from

those irrational conceptions of the Godhead which animated all the idolatries of the Gentile world. It was a Greek poet who had reached the conception that 'we also are His offspring,' and as a consequence of this purely intellectual perception of a natural and necessary fact, the Apostle argues that a moral obligation on us arose in respect to the highest of all subjects of belief: 'We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device [1].' When we remember that these words were spoken under the very walls of the renowned temple to Pallas Athene which held the sculptured image of that goddess, and in which the highest Grecian art, in its most glorious days, had lavished all its conceptions of the most perfect human beauty, we can measure in some degree not only the courage of the speaker, but the inspired conviction and confidence with which he appealed to the universal reason of mankind against the false ideas which had become popular on the Divine nature. That appeal lay not to the outward form of man, but to the structure and character of his mind and will. It was not an appeal to what is loosely called anthropomorphism applied to God, but to theopsychism applied to men—to men as indeed in some measure and degree made in God's image, and partaking, however faintly, of the one great reality which that Name represents to us. In the first part of his speech he had impressed on his hearers a conception of man's relationship to God which rendered the whole of this argument more

[1] Acts xvii. 28, 29.

easy of a rational acceptance, because it dwelt on the real nearness of the Godhead to us at all times—a nearness so close that we need not go far away to feel after Him and to find Him—seeing that He is an Universal Presence, 'in whom we live and move and have our being.' This points to a relationship much higher and closer than that which the Greek poet had asserted for us, namely, that of offspring, although even that relationship 'ought' to have been enough to redeem men from the worship of graven images. But if our relationship be still more intimate—even that of an included fragment living and moving and having its very life and breath in, and from, the Divine Being—then may the enlightened human consciousness and reason claim a very high place indeed in the sources of legitimate authority.

And here we come across the track of another conception of Christian theology which runs throughout the whole of it, and that is the existence of what is now called Inspiration. This word, indeed, is rarely used in the sacred books, either Hebrew or Christian. But the idea it expresses is of perpetual recurrence. The mere word is, as it were, too external, too material, too much isolated and separated from the common facts and experiences of human life. It does not accurately or adequately express the kind of influence which the prophets and apostles were conscious of in themselves, and which they evidently regarded as so perfectly natural that they did not habitually associate it with any special name. They

thought of what, occasionally, they called inspiration as simply an unusually direct impulse from the living God to some one or more of the million living souls which could only live in Him: 'Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost[1].' That 'moving' might be more or less definite and distinct, more or less consciously understood by those to whom the impulse came. But in all cases it was but a special exercise of an influence perfectly according to the natural constitution and course of things. It is indeed impossible so to define that which we mean by inspiration as to separate it, in kind, from all those instinctive perceptions of self-evident truth on which the whole structure and power of our reason depend. Nay, more, it is even impossible so to define the wonderful instincts of the lower animals as to separate them wholly from the idea of inspiration. The amount of knowledge and of foresight which is involved in some of these instincts is indeed astonishing. But it is involved implicitly and not explicitly. It is, as it were, put into the creatures as a part of their machinery, as an effect of their structure and organization. It has in it no element of independent or conscious reasoning. It is not really knowledge, but directed impulse. And the directing power is in them indeed, but not of them. It comes as directly from the Creator as the organic or animated machinery through which it works. The comparative narrowness of the sphere within which it operates, and the comparative lowness of the works it performs in them, does not

[1] 2 Pet. i. 21.

affect the question of its real affinity with the far higher manifestations with which we are accustomed to associate the word in man.

In the great dramatic poem of Job, which in itself is a striking example of much that we mean by inspiration, there is a profound indication given of the nature, of the true cause, and of the true source, of inspiration in man. In one striking passage it is compared and contrasted with the conscious gatherings of experience. Elihu, one of the interlocutors who is introduced to us as a young man, a descendant of a branch of the house of Abraham, is shocked by the want of humility in the language of Job and of some of his friends concerning the dealings of God with him. He is shy, however, in expressing this feeling in view of his own youth and of their age. But he is impelled by the consciousness of truth coming to him from a higher source than the mere ordinary wisdom that grows with age; and so he breaks out: 'Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged understand judgment[1].' Here we have the root idea that there is a spirit in man upon which the Divine Spirit can, and often does, directly operate by impulse or other modes of communication, not, as we may well believe, essentially different in their nature from those to which all our ordinary perceptions, both of moral and intellectual truth, are really due. This is the idea of

[1] Job xxxii. 7, 8.

Elihu when he says that it is the Spirit of God that gives to men their understanding, and that it is the same Spirit which may give a higher enlightenment to youth than is often attained by the experience of age. It is the same idea as that expressed by the Hebrew historian when he narrates the prayer of Solomon for wisdom in the political governing of his people, and the Divine response to that prayer: 'Lo, I have given thee an understanding heart[1].' And again: 'God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore[2].' It is the same idea which prompts the question, 'Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven[3]?' It is the idea of all the Hebrew prophets when they felt themselves commissioned to deliver special messages to those around them—messages which, it is clear from the very nature of them, were not fully comprehended by themselves. And yet not less, it is an idea of inspiration which at once places it in close relation with the ordinary facts of life, and enables us to understand how inspiration may exist in various measures and degrees. Man has been provided with instinctive powers and impulses not less than the lower animals, although they are masked in him by the higher faculties of reasoning, and by a larger sphere of will. But even in the highest regions of the intellect and of the scientific imagination, so consistent with known facts is the idea of impulses and

[1] 1 Kings iii. 12. [2] 1 Kings iv. 29. [3] Job xxxv. 11.

directions coming from above, that the word inspiration has been largely and familiarly appropriated to express all the phenomena of genius as they are known among men. In every region of mental exertion, but especially in the highest regions, where we have to interpret Nature to others or to ourselves, men have always been conscious of illuminating suggestions which come to them they know not whence—suggestions which very often have turned out to be the reflected light of some veritable and eternal truth.

When, therefore, both the Hebrew and Christian theologies assume, and repeatedly assert, the authority of inspired men in the Divine things, they are not calling on us to believe in any fact at variance with natural law as it prevails in the universe of God as seen and known to us. On the contrary, they are in perfect harmony with the whole system of things in which we live, and with the general consciousness of mankind. For, be it remembered that both theologies include, in their appeals to that consciousness, an admission that it is itself so far inspired as to be furnished with an apparatus for testing and recognizing righteousness and truth, as distinguished from unrighteousness and lies. They warn us that there may be inspirations from below, as well as from above, that there are evil spirits, as well as evil men. 'Even now,' says St. Paul, 'there are many false prophets gone out into the world,' and the warning is sounded, 'Try the spirits, whether they be of God.' All this is in perfect conformity with what we know and experience in life. We are perfectly conscious of impulses, of

obscure origin, which are both bad and good, and just as we sometimes see men not only of exceptional elevation of character, but of what we have agreed to call inspired and penetrative genius, so also do we see men abandoned to every vice, and inspired by an almost devilish ingenuity in evil. The whole language, therefore, both of the Old and of the New Testaments in this matter of inspiration, is in complete harmony with all that we know of as natural laws. And all this makes it easy for us to believe that, in the highest region of human knowledge, there have been men with conspicuously high degrees of inspiration, whose utterances we may well accept as authoritative in proportion to the truth and purity of their spiritual teaching, so far as we can judge of it. And this we are expressly desired to do.

Closely connected with the subject of Inspiration in Christian theology, lies the subject of what has been called Regeneration. Here again it is to be observed that, so far as regards the mere word, it is never used in the Old Testament, and but rarely in the New. Yet the doctrine which that word embodies is one of the most fundamental in both the Hebrew and Christian theologies. It may even be said with truth that no other single doctrine is so strongly expressed, and, at the same time, so clearly expounded by our Lord himself. And no other is so distinctly announced as depending on a natural and necessary spiritual law. This is one of the rare cases in the New Testament in which we have a doctrine announced to an honest but a doubting mind—

in which, further, the difficulty of that mind was most naturally and rationally expressed—and in which the voice of Authority explains itself in a prolonged and continuous discourse. The conversation arose with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who came to Christ, avowedly attracted by the miracles which He did, and expressly telling Him that it was on account of these that he, and others, knew that Jesus must be a 'teacher sent from God: for no man could do the miracles that He did, except God be with Him[1].' This was avowedly an appeal, and an appeal only, to external evidence. And this was the origin of the conversation which followed. It was upon this confession, and with obvious reference to it, that Jesus Christ responded by the announcement of a great general law governing all true knowledge of Divine things: 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' A mere intellectual conviction that there was some Divine authority in any teacher, or in his teaching, was not enough; and so the strongest figure of speech that could be found was used to explain the transforming power of a real faith when it gets full possession of the heart and life. Nicodemus, dwelling on the mere figure as distinguished from the thing figured, asked how a man could enter his mother's womb a second time and be born. Our Lord replies by an elaborate explanation of the two great sources from which such a transforming faith must come—first and foremost, the influence of that Divine Spirit which, like the

[1] John iii. 2.

very air we breathe, dwells in us and around us, and can ever move from unseen directions the thoughts and hearts of men; secondly, the very structure and nature of those hearts and minds, which enables them to respond to that influence, and to see spiritual truth when it is presented to them. Founding on this natural adjustment or adaptation, He insists on the moral elements in all belief. He asserts clearly and emphatically His own claims to be the predicted Messiah, and explains the object of His mission, that 'the world through Him might be saved.' He asserts that the rejection of this claim would be in itself condemnation, and He expressly explains that this condemnatory character consisted in the rejection of truths which were recognizable by the ordinary faculties of men when rightly and virtuously used. Such a rejection, consequently, was really determined by the power of an alienated moral will: 'And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil[1].'

Nothing can be more clear than that this doctrine was not propounded by our Lord as a new one. On the contrary, He expresses astonishment that it should seem so to a Jew like Nicodemus: 'Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things[2]?' Both branches of this doctrine, that which relates to the indwelling of God's Spirit in the very nature of man, and that which relates to a responsive structure and receptivity in the human soul—of both these

[1] John v. 10. [2] John v. 19.

ideas the Hebrew Scriptures are full from beginning to end. They are inseparable, not only from the very conception of prophetic inspiration, but from the calls to repentance, and to a change of life, which the prophets were perpetually addressing to the whole of their race and nation. They are inseparable, not less, from the reiterated stress laid on the true nature of sacrifice and of all acceptable worship. They always expressly appealed to the moral conscience and reason of men as quite competent to form a judgment on this and on other related truths. It is not too much to say that the whole structure of Christianity reposes on this doctrine. That it involves a direct appeal to natural and reasonable laws as supreme in the whole sphere of the spiritual world, is an obvious fact. Nor is it less obvious that we can recognize the same laws as of familiar operation in lower things. As regards the moral elements involved in our beliefs, this doctrine is founded on the fact that we have innate or, in other words, inspired perceptions on many things of primary importance, and are responsible for the power of recognizing others as cognate with them. It is in accordance with the well-known and familiar fact that in our own judgments on our fellow-men, in our often acute and true perception of the motives by which they are actuated, and not seldom in our own consciousness of the workings of our own spirits, we all know, and have embodied this truth of Nature in the well-known proverb, that 'the wish is father to the thought.' Christian theology invariably places the

master difficulty it has to contend with in a perverted will. But it as invariably represents our nature as

> 'Trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God who is our Home[1],'

and as redeemable by a fresh inpouring, and reception, of that Divine Spirit which is never 'far from any one of us.' There are individual passages, indeed, in both the Old and New Testaments which, taken singly, might seem to imply a total and an irredeemable corruption. Nowhere is this view more severely expressed than in the exclamation of the Hebrew Psalmist, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me[2].' But such is not the last word, or the most comprehensive word on this subject, among the utterances which, at sundry times and in diverse manners, have spoken to us in the Hebrew and in the Christian theologies. The change, which our Lord describes as comparable with that of a new birth, when a man turns from a wicked and godless life to a life of righteousness and faith, is always spoken of as a change—even as a physical birth is—in the nature of a development of pre-existing germs. It is not an absolutely new or arbitrary creation. It is not wholly unrelated to the nature and innate powers of the Being who is the subject of it. It is in the highest sense a natural change, taking place according to the eternal laws of an everlasting and righteous kingdom.

There are many passages in our Lord's recorded sayings which bring home to us, perhaps still more

[1] Wordsworth's *Ode to Immortality.* [2] Ps. li. 5.

clearly, the perfect accordance between the Christian doctrine of regeneration and the working of known and intelligible moral laws. One of His disciples pushed the direct question which asked for a fuller explanation: 'Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world[1]?' Nothing can be more intelligible or reasonable—nothing more natural—nothing, so to speak, more human—than the explanation given: 'If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him[2].' It is impossible to conceive any more satisfying answer—any answer more in harmony than this with moral laws which approve themselves to our natural conscience, and to our actual observation and experience in life. For, here we come across one of the well-known tests and proofs of a great natural law, namely, the perpetual recurrence of certain characteristic effects. The actual production in men of that kind of change which corresponds exactly to our Lord's promise and prediction, is one of the commonest and most notorious facts in the history of Christianity. There is nothing, in His account of the nature or occasions of the effects which He called a new birth, that necessarily or even presumably connected them with suddenness in point of time, or with conspicuous appearances of any kind. Rather the contrary; that kind of patient continuance in known well-doing, which was to be so richly rewarded, is generally a slow and silent work. But

[1] John xiv. 22. [2] John xiv. 23.

neither did His words exclude that variety of circumstance and of manifestation which is in accordance with the varieties of human character, and of the operations upon it of spiritual agencies. Accordingly, in the history of the Christian Church the circumstances attending great changes in the beliefs and in the whole character and conduct of individual men, have been immensely various. In the case of the first disciples they seem to have been first struck and attracted by the sayings of a gracious and powerful Personality, and to have acquired only slowly and gradually a conviction that the Master whom they were constrained to follow, was indeed One who 'had the words of eternal life.' In the case of St. Paul, indeed, his conversion took place under conditions which were sudden and astounding. The most powerful human intellect, probably, that has ever been employed in the service of Christianity, was changed in a moment from passionate hostility to an equally passionate devotion. St. Augustine has narrated the circumstances under which a new man was made of him—how a profligate life became pure and holy, and another vigorous and original intellect was enlisted among the foremost soldiers of the Cross. But these are nothing more than a few conspicuous instances of a process which, in a great variety of forms, has now, through nearly 1900 years, had the same result on a multitude of human souls whom no man can number. As is truly said by a recent writer, who until very lately was himself a prominent unbeliever of the agnostic school, 'Now, this experience has

been repeated and testified to by the countless millions of civilized men and women in all nations and all degrees of culture[1].'

And be it observed, this is a new fact in the history of man—new, that is to say, since Christ came. There is, indeed, a remarkable and a very noble passage in the *Discourses* of Epictetus[2], the Greek slave of a Roman citizen, who taught in the reign of Nero, which, like other utterances of the Stoics, involves just so much of the principle of the Christian doctrine of conversion as to show how completely it is confirmed by the natural reason of man. It is a passage on the freedom and responsibility of the will, and on its power, under discipline, to effect a complete change of character. 'What greater good do you seek than this?' asks Epictetus; and he answers thus: 'From a shameless man you will become a modest man, from a disorderly man you will become an orderly man, from a faithless man you will become a faithful man, from a man of unbridled habits a sober man.' This is a beautiful and imposing adumbration of the Christian doctrine. But, like other gleams and glimpses of great spiritual truth which illuminated the Stoical philosophy, it was severed from all the cognate truths and facts on which its force and power depended. We never hear of such a total change of life and conduct having been ever known in the heathen world. Even in the Hebrew Church we do not read of repentance taking that form of total change in character which is a familiar

[1] *Thoughts on Religion*, Romanes (edited by Canon Gore), pp. 162, 163.

[2] *Discourses* of Epictetus, chap. ix.

fact in Christian life. And yet we cannot say that it was impossible before, or that the Spirit of God did not dwell with men as He dwells now. There is no spiritual experience of Christianity which does not find its highest expression in some one or other of the Psalms. In Job we have a most striking description of the effect of some unusually direct vision of the Divine nature in producing in man a horror of his own sinfulness: 'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes[1].' But no mere passing impression of this kind, however powerful, comes up to the Christian idea, 'That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness[2].' And this renewal is not represented as any magical effect procured, once for all, without the use of appropriate means, but as a process continuous and needing our own co-operation to perfect and keep it up to its work, in the midst, it may be, of difficulties and trials: 'For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day[3].' Moreover, the Christian Apostle, in teaching that this renewing is inseparably connected with a pure life, and with the abandonment of every kind of unrighteousness, specially calls it a growth in 'knowledge' and a return, however incomplete,

[1] Job xlii. 5, 6. [2] Eph. iv. 22–24. [3] 2 Cor. iv. 16.

towards that image in which man was originally created: 'Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him [1].' This is in perfect harmony with the language and teaching of the oldest Hebrew Scriptures, which always identifies absolute truth as the only object of knowledge, and men's recognizing and appreciating faculties as related to that Divine nature in which all truth is centred. Hebrew theology always taught that true religion is truth in all its forms, so that perfect knowledge would be perfect righteousness, and perfect worship. But undoubtedly Christian theology dwelt upon, and developed in quite a new degree, the idea of the Divine nature in man, and of the possible renewal of it by a personal indwelling of the Divine Spirit in each individual soul. That complete transformation of personal character which has been a common phenomenon in the world since Christ came, is inseparably connected with the acceptance of this idea, as it is inseparably connected with the signal demonstration of its objective truth as a fact in Nature.

It is precisely in this highest of all the regions of Christian doctrine that we encounter most clearly certain declarations of our Lord himself which point to the reign of unalterable laws and to the necessity of conforming to them. Just as the special facts of Christian experience exhibit many cases of

[1] Col. iii. 9.

a marked change in the development of spiritual life, so does Christian philosophy establish conceptions which are in the nature of an explanation. As a fact, the life, the teaching, and the self-sacrificing death of Christ, have been the means of inspiring men with a new power of understanding, and of loving, God. It is as if a new channel of communication had been opened between the Mind of the Creator and the minds of individual men. And this is what Jesus Christ himself says of the great purpose of His own advent and ministry. Somehow—how and why exactly is beyond us, but somehow—it was necessary that He should do and suffer all that He actually did and suffered, in order that the Divine Spirit should come and abide with men in a sense and in a manner which was new in the world: 'It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you[1].' And the purpose to be fulfilled by this great Agency is expressly explained to be, not any sudden, arbitrary, or miraculous revelation, but some slow and gentle guidance through wider and ever wider horizons of that perfect knowledge which is perfect worship: 'When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth[2].' It is quite true that the very existence of such necessities in the nature and constitution of things—necessities lying even on the working of an Almighty will—is and must ever be a wonder and a difficulty to us. But at least we must see it to be

[1] John xvi. 7. [2] John xvi. 13.

indisputably true that this very difficulty assumes and recognizes the doctrine as a fact to be so, and therefore carries into the very heart's centre of Christian theology, the idea of laws unchangeable and supreme. It is certain that the Apostles of Christ, in using the language that involves this conception, did not use it only incidentally, or occasionally, or metaphorically, or as if they were forgetting for a moment its apparent incongruity with Divine omnipotence. One of the most striking passages in which it is used is a passage that expresses also in the most emphatic terms the supremacy of the Godhead, and represents it as exerting itself according to moral laws for the attainment of its Divine purposes: 'For it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' If, on the Divine side, this presents an insoluble difficulty to us—if we cannot understand what absolute moral necessity is hid under this expression 'it became'—yet at least, on the human side, we can see how the human life of Christ, and how His sufferings have, as a fact of experience and observation, operated on the human mind in 'renewing a right spirit within it,' and in bringing many sons to that highest kind of glory. It adds that Divine element of compassion to our contemplation of His ministry on earth which is one of the strongest and noblest elements in love. Our Lord himself seems to have contemplated this strictly natural effect as one main element in His prophetic vision of a recovered and regenerated world.

For this idea, surely, is conveyed when He said, 'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me[1].' The existence and the power of natural attractions operating in the spiritual world as the causes of spiritual effects, could not be more expressively asserted.

[1] John xii. 32.

Chapter VIII.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

THE NATURE AND FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

We have brought a large part of the Christian system under the domain of Law when we have recognized as necessary or natural such conceptions as those we have now referred to—that the human mind is, in some real measure and degree, an image of the mind which is supreme in Nature; that a fuller and higher incarnation of it cannot be regarded as difficult of belief; that inspiration, in an infinite variety of degrees, is quite according to the existing constitution and course of things; that the nature and efficacy of sacrifice admits of some reasonable explanation; that love, properly so called, must have a personal object; that this affection is an essential element in belief as distinguished from mere intellectual conviction; and that, through the operation of it, the renewal of a lost, or a damaged, intercourse between individual souls and the Divine Spirit, is in perfect harmony with the observed facts of human life.

It remains, however, to point out that the whole

system of Christian ethics is a part, and an inseparable part, of Christian theology. And in being an inseparable part of that theology, Christian ethics claims, for the whole of it, an absolute conformity with known and intelligible laws. It appeals to the moral consciousness of man as quite capable of seeing and knowing the existence and the demands of moral obligation. It treats this power of vision as a branch of natural and independent knowledge, and even indicates it as a means of testing the genuineness of authority in doctrine, 'Ye shall know them by their fruits[1].' This is a familiar saying which commends itself to universal recognition. Yet probably there are few who are at all conscious of its latent implications It rests upon the fact that the beauty, and taste, and wholesomeness, of vegetable fruits are known, or are knowable, by all men. But this is a branch of knowledge which is purely instinctive and even physical. We have senses which assure us of it. If, therefore, the verdicts of our knowledge such as this, can be likened to our sense of the highest spiritual claims, it follows that these claims must be related to intelligible laws, and have an indissoluble connexion with products which are, to us, direct objects of cognition. This teaching runs underground, as it were, through the whole field of Christian theology. It breaks out, even upon the surface, in many places, as when St. Paul declares that everything which we can know and love as excellent, whether in knowledge or in virtue, is the natural growth and product of roots which have been

[1] Matt. vii. 16.

divinely planted in us: 'The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth[1].' It is true that Christian theology puts a supreme value on motive as the determining element in the goodness of all deeds, and of all conduct. But this is in perfect harmony with the moral and intellectual consciousness of men. They never do admire or attribute any virtue to deeds which they can detect as due to some bad or inferior motive. And our judgment on those motives which are inferior, or otherwise, is according to a standard which is instinctive, or in other words, inspired. Christian theology in recognizing this independent basis of morality, disclaims, as it were, any mere arbitrary or external standard unconnected with the universal system of things in which we live. It recognizes the possibility, and the fact, of goodness in a great variety of degrees, as existing, and as familiarly known, outside the circle of its own disciples. It calls on those disciples to practise, and to dwell upon, the implanted and instinctive recognitions of virtue which were abundant even in a very corrupted world. St. Paul, in closing an address to the Philippians, which is full of the most highly spiritual conceptions of Christian belief, puts this doctrine of an independent morality into words of the greatest earnestness as bearing on those testing fruits of that belief which were visible to all: 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are

[1] Eph. v. 9.

of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things[1].'

So little did our Lord consider the human appreciation of goodness in all its forms as an influence which was extinct even in the pagan world, that He dwelt upon it as a power on which He relied as the most natural, because the most universally accessible, witness to all the truths He taught: 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven[2].' This is a doctrine which at once condemns, as a great error, all attempts to represent Christian theology as interested in proving that its ethics were wholly new, and that nothing like its moral precepts ever existed in the world before. It shows that, on the contrary, they had their origin in the nature of things—the human heart and soul being not only among those things, but standing first and foremost in their ranks. Nor does this great principle of Christian theology stop short when it has claimed an origin cognate with itself for the primary sense and precepts of moral obligation. The principle extends also to many purely spiritual conceptions which occur, sporadically as it were, in religions otherwise false, or in philosophical speculations which sometimes make a wonderful approach to harmony with the doctrines of the Cross. The whole stream of our Lord's own teaching, and of the teaching of His Apostles, runs in the direction of claiming, and embracing, and amalgamating, all such spiritual drift-

[1] Phil. iv. 8. [2] Matt. v. 16.

material floating on that river of human life which carries down upon its stream many innate, or far-descended, inheritances of our common nature. What Christian theology had to do for these inheritances, and what it has actually done for them, has been the work which all systematic knowledge does, and that is to co-ordinate them with the higher and central truths on which they depend, or from which they flow, and apart from which they can never long hold together, or exert any permanent influence in the world. Christ not only took them for what they were worth—as if that worth were small—but He glorified them as due to that inspired element in man to which He appealed for the recognition of His own higher revelation. What He, and all His Apostles, urged on their disciples, was to show the world how much more perfectly the natural moral laws which were common to humanity, could be obeyed, when such obedience is seen in the light of obligation to a known God—of love and loyalty to a personal incarnation of His Divine nature. No abstract idea, no philosophical speculation of rare and difficult attainment, could supply the motive power which this one great central influence could alone generate in the souls of men. Hence we have the declaration of St. Paul that 'Love is the fulfilling of the Law[1],' that a life of love directed to its one supreme object in Him who is in Himself Truth, in all its forms, would, of a natural necessity, be a life of righteousness, in direct proportion to its constancy and fervour.

[1] Rom. xiii. 10.

Nor is it less remarkable that whilst Christian theology appeals to a natural power for the great motive force in ethics, it does also no less appeal to the natural reason and conscience of men as regards its practical tests of ethical obligation. The golden rule of its moral judgment is a rule expressly made out of the materials supplied by the natural reason and conscience of mankind. It is no mechanical rule—no mere list of necessities laid down by external authority—to be taken upon that authority, and with no other sanction. It is a spiritual rule of the largest kind, resting on a natural exercise both of the intellectual and moral powers of men. These are assumed to be competent judges of its general truth, and competent directors, too, of its particular applications: 'Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets[1].' And this most natural and practical rule is expressly founded on an appeal to the natural reason. Just as His Apostle Paul appealed against the irrational character of idolatry to a well-known doctrine of Greek poetry and philosophy—namely, the Fatherhood of God—so did our Lord appeal to that same conception as adequate to sustain the deep foundation of Christian ethics. The natural emotions which lead human parents to give good things to their children were to be accounted the type of the disposition of God towards the creatures He has made, when they come to Him to ask for such things as even their human instincts tell them to be good[2].

[1] Matt. vii. 12. [2] Matt. vii. 11.

And here let it be noted that this idea of ethical obligation in our conduct towards our neighbour, includes, and sanctifies, all that is really true in the Utilitarian theory of morals. It is perfectly true that in forming our estimate of what are, and of what are not, good things, we do, and we must, found that estimate on the known results of the possession of them. The abstract idea of obligation, indeed, and the sense of it, is antecedent and independent. But the special direction it takes in the particular things we do for, or give to, our neighbour, is determined by our own perception, whether it be low or high, of the good ends which these things will serve in our neighbour's present or future state. Here, as in many other cases, the teachings of Christian theology rise above all the wrangling of the schools, and represent Divine Truth as open and accessible to the simplest analysis of natural laws in that spiritual world in which, even now, we live.

The degree to which Christian ethics rest upon natural laws of our own conscious moral sense, is most evidently seen when we compare those ethics with the attempts which have been made to set up some other standard of obligation in their stead. Some modern speculative philosophers have imagined that they could greatly improve upon the morality of Christian theology, by divorcing virtue from all expectation of reward, and by lifting our duty to others above any limitations whatever having reference to ourselves. And for this idea they have coined a new word, 'Altruism,' which is to replace the old and less perfect conceptions represented by such words as

charity, or benevolence, or love. But an invented word is generally little better than a broken thought. This is one of the many cases in which human instincts are much more philosophical than philosophy. It is at least an unquestionable fact that in those instincts there is an inseparable connexion between virtue and the hope of its natural rewards, as there also are natural limitations in our regard for others, arising out of our duty to ourselves. These ties, seated in the very nature of things, are recognized in the old language both of natural and of Christian theology. Such proverbial sayings as that 'virtue is its own reward,' or that 'honesty is the best policy,' are witnesses to the instinctive recognition of natural and necessary laws, as linking together, in a perfect unity, the very idea of goodness and of the consequences attendant on it. If the precepts of morality were mere arbitrary commands, having no necessary connexion with the order of Nature, then indeed the rewards promised to obedience could be separated, in thought, from other motives which impel or draw us to that obedience. But when these precepts are apprehended as conformity with a righteous Personal Will which is supreme in Nature, and which governs all things by necessary laws, then it is impossible even to conceive of goodness and obedience as separable from the blessedness which such conformity must of necessity involve.

This is the uniform conception and language of the Hebrew, as well as of the Christian, theology.

It is magnificently expressed in the account given in the Book of Genesis of the call of Abraham, where Jehovah Himself is represented as speaking to the Patriarch in a vision, and saying, 'Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward [1].' And so in the nineteenth Psalm the same idea is enforced in the praises there sung of the judgments of the Lord, as being in themselves absolute righteousness and truth: 'Moreover by them is Thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward [2].' In Proverbs we have the inseparable unity between goodness and its reward as definitely expressed: 'The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: . . . to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward [3].' Here we have the idea of the reward of goodness being its natural and necessary results, expressed in the clearest of all images, namely, that of the flowers and fruits that germinate from seeds in the vegetable world.

When this conception has been grasped, it reveals to us that we are taking not a higher, but a much lower, view of ethical obligation, when we try to separate it from that element which, above all others, identifies it with its ultimate source in the Divinely constituted nature of things. If its rewards were purely arbitrary or even conventional, as money-wages may sometimes be—if they came from an alien source, or even a source wholly outside itself—then indeed it might be rational to think of the consequences of goodness as a motive inferior in kind to the bare sense of

[1] Gen. xv. 1. [2] Ps. xix. 11. [3] Prov. xi. 17, 18.

the duty of obedience to obligation considered in itself. This lower, and purely human, aspect of rewards, is not unnoticed by the sacred writers, and is always so referred to as to stamp it with the same disparagement as that which is so erroneously applied to the true doctrine of Christian ethics. In Deuteronomy we have a passage in which the goodness and the power of Jehovah is extolled as those of a God 'which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward [1].' Whilst in several passages of the prophets, as well as in the New Testament, the mere looking for rewards as the only motive of conduct, is spoken of in a similar connexion. But this is, as it were, a mere by-path of Hebrew and of Christian thought, in which it encounters and deals with the case of men who work only for pay—who are 'hirelings' and nothing more—and whose inferior motive is contrasted, even in the care of property, with the love and interest which belongs to simple ownership: 'The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep,' &c.

But here, as elsewhere, Christian theology is intensely human, recognizing in its ethical system every motive which, in its own place, is really good, and—in its main stream of teaching—always glorifying every form of goodness with consistent and continual reference to its own consequences of reward as natural and appropriate. It is the nature of the reward we look for, not the mere looking for a reward of some kind, that is recognized in Christian ethics as giving a

[1] Deut. x. 17.

moral or a spiritual quality to conduct. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews thinks it no disparagement to our Lord Himself, to connect His life and death of unique self-sacrifice, with the expectation of some ineffable joy that was to follow as the consequence of His work; and all Christians are exhorted to think of, and to be strengthened by, the encouragement of His example: 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God[1].' And however difficult it may be for us to fathom these words in all that they seem to involve—so as to measure what is here called the joy of Christ—yet the source and nature of it at least is indicated in these other words of our Lord—so human and yet so Divine—'joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth[2].'

Never, in Christian ethics, is goodness in any form even imagined as separate from its reflex action on those in whom it dwells. In the splendour of our Lord's Beatitudes this union is seen to be complete. The blessedness pronounced on each most happy attitude or disposition of the human spirit, is in every case so expressed as to represent its reward as the inseparable consequence of its own inherent excellence. 'For' is the connecting word throughout the series, implying the operation of a natural law or, in other words, of a reasonable cause. When, for example, we are told that the humble-minded, or 'the poor

[1] Heb. xii. 2. [2] Luke xv. 7.

in spirit,' are blessed, 'for' 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' we find ourselves in the presence and under the power of that most fruitful of all ethical conceptions—'The kingdom of God is within you[1].' And how true this is even in the lower walks of goodness, is a matter of everyday experience and observation. In proportion as any human character approaches the characteristic qualities which St. Paul enumerates in his comprehensive description of Christian charity, we see, as a fact, both that it is happy in itself—that it attracts the love of others—and that it exerts a powerful assimilating influence upon them. Again, the blessedness of those who 'do hunger and thirst after righteousness,' is explained to consist in the natural result of such affections; 'for they shall be filled.' Thus, it is not only well to get such rewards, but it is right to look for them. They are, as it were, parts of the goodness which makes it good. They are nothing but its reflected light, and that light would not be light if it were not so reflected. It is therefore no disparagement to the system of Christian ethics that it looks continually to the 'great recompense of reward[2].' On the contrary, it is one of the many tests of its universal truth that its sanctions are seated in the very nature of things and the constitution of the universe.

It may well occur to us, sometimes, to ask how it is that if Christian ethics are so deeply founded on the whole natural constitution and course of things,

[1] Luke xvii. 21. [2] Heb. x. 35.

that course, so far as human life and conduct are concerned, has become so widely deflected from the paths of righteousness and peace? The vices and miseries of the world as we see it, do not look like the existence of any natural gift in man, enabling him to recognize those moral precepts to which he owes obedience,—at the peril of all the heavy judgments we do now see him actually suffering. The solution presented by Christian theology, is the only conceivable solution of this difficulty. That solution lies in the very nature and definition of all wrong-doing as the action of a free, but a revolted or rebellious will, conscious in some measure of its obligations—but defying them. Without freedom of the will there could indeed be no vice, but neither could there be any virtue. No moral character belongs to a necessary and mechanical obedience. There is, therefore, an equal intellectual difficulty either way—in understanding why a free will was given to us capable of sin, or how it could have been withheld from us if it could be capable of goodness. But neither aspect of this difficulty can alter the evidence of facts. It is upon facts and laws, established on concurrent evidence from every direction in all our fields of observation and experience, that we identify the system of Christian ethics, alike in its judgments and in its rewards, with the whole moral, and even physical, government of the world by natural consequences as the result of conduct.

The difficulties which are connected with the prevalent miseries of the world, were assuredly not

difficulties which escaped the notice of the authorized teachers of Christian theology. Even one of the old Psalmists had complained how the 'dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty[1].' But no writer has ever stated them so forcibly as St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. In the seventh and eighth chapters of that epistle we have a view presented to us of our human nature, which, in some of its aspects at least, would now be called Pessimist. He connects all evil with the very flesh of which we are heirs: 'For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not[2].' Nor does he hesitate to connect this consciousness of evil and of infirmity, with facts so universally true as to indicate a natural law; 'I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me[3].' And so full is he of the actual results in life, that he sums up his account of them with this strong figure: 'For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.' Yet it is in the face of this almost oppressive consciousness of the pain and vice of our human state, that he expresses, nevertheless, the most sublime confidence in the righteousness of the Divine government as seated in the very nature of things. As certainly as he 'knows' the one, so certainly does he know the other. There is a natural and efficient cause for the groaning and the travailing, and so also is there, for them, a natural and efficient remedy: For

[1] Ps. lxxiv. 20. [2] Rom. vii. 18. [3] Rom. vii. 21.

'we know that all things work together for good to them that love God[1].' No words could express more clearly not only the strength of this confidence but the nature of it. All things 'working together' for the production of some one great general result—this is the very image or typical idea of the operation of a natural law in the highest form in which we can conceive its meaning.

And this principle runs through and through the whole system of Christian ethics. It habitually appeals to reason as the supreme element in an enlightened conscience. The Apostles constantly did so against the very strongest of their own natural and customary preconceptions. Perhaps there was no one of these stronger than the inseparable association which, in the Hebrew mind, connected certain kinds of food with the notion of uncleanness or defilement. When, therefore, Christ announced it as a principle and a law that, 'not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man,' He appears to have given great offence. Even His Apostles asked an explanation, and His answer was a rebuke—as if even the very question implied a want of understanding: 'Do not ye yet understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly?... but those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart; and they defile the man[2].' Then, it is in the same connexion that we have the subtle and discriminating verdict of St. Paul, on the morality of

[1] Rom. viii. 28. [2] Matt. xv. 17, 18.

Christians eating food which was offered to idols. He bases his decision entirely upon facts. First, he takes the greatest of all facts, that an idol is, in itself, an absolute nonentity, having power neither to bless nor to curse, seeing that there is none other God but One: and secondly, he takes the consequent fact that whatever evil could possibly be connected with an idol, must be entirely in the prevailing atmosphere of opinion amongst other men with whom Christians might happen to consort. In itself, food consecrated to an idol could do a Christian neither good nor harm. But if other men consciously attached to the eating of it a spirit of unworthy compliance with idolatrous conceptions, then, the personal liberty of Christians would become a stumbling-block to others. And that would be a sin —a sin against the brethren, which was, of necessity, a sin against Christ.

The whole of this judgment on the question is essentially an appeal to reason—to a conscience enlightened by knowledge of fundamental facts, and of the natural consequences which could be rationally traced between outward acts that were in themselves innocent, but might become immoral from the effects they might produce on others. No ethical principle could be more thoroughly natural, or, in other words, more thoroughly rational, than this, and it is an excellent example both of 'that glorious liberty of the children of God,' which Christian theology claimed for those who know the truth, and also of the restraints on that liberty which are due to a vigilant

watchfulness of all the calculable, though complicated, results of conduct. Nothing can be more striking than the contrast between the absolute freedom which St. Paul asserts for the Christian, as flowing from his knowledge of fundamental truths, and the determination he expresses that this freedom must be sacrificed, when other facts intervene which import other considerations into the court of conscience: 'Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend[1].'

But above all things, it is to be noted that in this far-reaching judgment of St. Paul on a burning ethical question of his time, there is a new element included which belongs to Christianity, and to Christianity alone. It is still a perfectly rational element, in the sense of being in thorough harmony with the analogies of Nature. But it is connected with a new fact, and a new conception, which had been supplied to reason, whereon to exercise its ordinary powers with all their appropriate emotions. The whole argument of St. Paul turned on the practical effects produced by a given act upon the brethren. But who were they? The new fact, bearing on this question, was the advent and the death of Christ. In these events a new tie of brotherhood had been established with all mankind. A new force as well as a new direction had been thus given to the sense of obligation. Foreshadowed, but not in its fulness known, this tie of spiritual brotherhood had—at least within the people of one race—

[1] 1 Cor. viii. 1–13.

been a familiar conception in the theology of the Hebrews. Its Prophets and its Psalmists had risen to the highest interpretation of it, at various times, and in various utterances. In the exclamation, 'I am a companion of all them that fear Thee[1]'—in the repeated predictions of a Messiah who was to be accepted by the whole Gentile world—in these and in many other sayings of a like kind, the whole principle of St. Paul's language had been involved. But when the Jew who had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, had come to recognize in Christ the 'desire' of all nations,' then, this old language of the Hebrew Scriptures represented to him no longer a mere promise, or a mere hope, but an accomplished and an all-powerful fact. That the miseries of the world, which he saw and felt so much, could only be remedied by so great a sacrifice, gave of necessity a new idea of the mere tie of human brotherhood, and of the essential wickedness of all acts which could mislead, or misguide, or offend, a brother. Every human being was now seen in the light of a brother 'for whom Christ died.' The duties men owe to comradeship—whether the objects of association be poor and low, or high and noble—are perhaps more naturally, and more universally, recognized than any other. The sense of obligation connected with them is one of the strongest of all natural powers. It is the abounding source of evil, as well as of good, in many forms, not only stimulating to crime, but systematizing it; and not seldom throwing over its most hideous deformities the false glamour

[1] Ps. cxix. 63.

of a virtuous fidelity. This is the great natural force, or power, to which Christian theology appeals, and enlists in its own lofty service. It presents to its disciples the conception of a great brotherhood in arms—warring against all the ills and vices of a troubled world, under the leadership of a Divine Person who has walked and spoken on our earth—who is the captain of our salvation, and who was made perfect through sufferings. To all the enthusiasm which men have been able to cherish for some great abstract cause, St. Paul thus added that personal love and devotion of which only a Person can be the appropriate object.

And this is the conception that permeates and inspires the whole system of Christian ethics. In the light of it, all goodness must be tested and measured by the traceable consequences of conduct upon the highest interests of that universal brotherhood of mankind for which Christ lived and died. This is, at once, a motive and a standard of obligation, involving a great natural law and not only allowing, but demanding of us, the rational and careful application of it, under expanding knowledge of all the subordinate laws, which we can trace and identify in the constitution and course of Nature. It is a conception that does not consist in any mere string of precepts, or list of rules. It consists in a living spirit ever wakeful in the service of a living Master, and consciously aiming at co-operation with Him in the recovery of a Divine dominion. It is powerfully expressed in the description of that new priesthood

which was to be 'made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life[1].' It is not therefore to be grudgingly granted as a concession, but to be seen with joy and asserted as a confirmation of the authority of Christian ethics, that they are in the main coincident with the precepts of morality as known by the natural conscience of mankind. Christian theology insists on this as the great test of its own truth, and on the fact that its light is, therefore, self-revealing. St. Paul speaks of himself and of his apostolic brethren as 'commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God[2];' and our Lord Himself always speaks of His teaching as carrying its own evidence in itself.

Nevertheless, we must not carry this doctrine of universal ethical perceptions too far. There are some such perceptions which do undoubtedly occupy this position; but these are all very rudimentary, and are all connected with the rudest social necessities of human life. Such things for example as treachery, ingratitude, and cruelty, have been almost universally and instinctively felt to be bad or evil influences in conduct. But even these have been often condemned only when practised against men of the same tribe or nation, and not at all condemned—nay, even commended—when practised against enemies or rivals, or simply strangers, towards whom no binding obligations of any kind existed. Fidelity to truth, which, in its highest conception, is at the root of everything in the Hebrew and Christian theologies, was a virtue by no

[1] Heb. vii. 15, 16. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 2.

means widely recognized in the heathen world, and it is one of which many nations had lost all sense whatever. All that can be said therefore of a universal ethical sense, is that it existed in a rudimentary form everywhere, and, above all, that in its own nature and functions it was capable of appreciating not only every new revelation of the ultimate principles it involves, but also the beauty and excellence of every new exhibition of these, in their applications to conduct.

When, however, we come to close quarters with the ethics of Christian theology, we cannot fail to see not only how totally new its conceptions then were, but how unexhausted, and inexhaustible, they are now. We have tried in this work to read the Prophets as if we read them for the first time, and with a fresh eye. Let any of us make the same attempt with some of the many passages in the New Testament which give us the characteristic teaching of Christian ethics, and let us endeavour to measure the number, and the prevailing power, of the natural laws which are there asserted and involved. Let us take, for example, the three chapters in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans which give a rapid summary of the principles of conduct which were inseparable from the doctrines of Christianity[1]. It is impossible not to be struck by their unique character—by their unlikeness to anything that had been known before in the religions of the world. It is impossible not to see how sparing they are in mere mechanical direction—how full to overflowing they are of spiritual guidance. It is a system of

[1] Rom. xii, xiii, xiv.

rationalism in the highest sense and of the purest kind. That is to say, it is a system, essentially, of conformity to reason, but to reason supplied, for the first time, with a knowledge of the supreme facts in Nature, and applying that knowledge according to its own laws. It begins with the fundamental conception that man has a Divine Creator, to whom he owes all that constitutes his organism as a personal power in Nature—as an originating agency. His whole body with all its life and faculties, are, therefore, to be presented and consecrated to God as a 'living sacrifice,' which is nothing more than our 'reasonable service.' All the specific virtues commended are predisposing dispositions of the heart, and these are treated as the natural fruit of this one great rational and intelligible law. In the whole list there is nothing formal—no mere observance. There is only one which takes the shape even of an outward act—and that one is an act significant of affection for brethren in the faith,—namely, 'distributing to the necessities of the saints.' All the rest are in the nature of general precepts—not of detailed commandments. They begin with that attitude of personal humility which is so reasonably demanded of creatures living among, and holding in themselves, innumerable mysteries and problems which are to them infinitely attractive, and yet absolutely insoluble. They include all the dispositions which can sweeten individual life, and they extend to principles of conduct without which the stability of political societies would be impossible. If we try to exhaust their applications, we become conscious of their vastness

and of their penetration. In reading them we seem to feel and know the truth of the saying that 'the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart[1].'

This is the region in which the system of Christian ethics sets up its throne. This is the region—the thoughts and intents of the heart—into which it throws the beam of a searching, subtle, and discriminating analysis. Not only in this typical passage, but in many others scattered all through the New Testament, it reveals, as it were, the very structure and intimate nature of all goodness, as distinguished from its mere outward manifestations. These are always represented as the natural flowers and fruits of a central stem, as beautiful and as various as those of the vegetable world under its countless conditions of adaptation to atmosphere and to soil. 'Faith working by love' is the root to which all are traced —that is to say, our knowledge of, and our absolute belief in, certain supreme facts concerning our relations to a Divine Person, and the motives which these inspire. This is a correspondence which is always represented as rooted in the very nature of things, so that faith, in the Christian sense, is not mere assent to any purely intellectual conceptions, but a living and moving power in the soul and heart.

The catalogue of illustrative precepts given by

[1] Heb. iv. 12.

St. Paul to the converts at Rome, is not, and does not profess to be, exhaustive. Yet if we read it with a desire to follow, in thought, the practical effects on conduct which anything like a full adoption of it would necessarily involve, it must be obvious at once that these consequences would be nothing less than a transformation of the world. It will be time enough to speak, as some men now do, of the value of Christianity being exhausted, and of the need of some new system of beliefs to take up what it has left undone, when anything approaching to a full trial of Christian ethics has been made, even as these are represented in this one short passage, of one epistle, of one of the Apostles. In the abstract, all the principles he lays down command the universal assent of all men. And this assent is due to no other authority than that which attaches to all self-evident truth, whether in the purely intellectual, or in the aesthetic, or in the moral sphere. Just as some exquisite flower, or shell, or plume, is seen to be beautiful because the form, or the colouring, or both, are felt, as such, by adapted organs of sense in us—so do the beauty and excellence of those precepts of Christian theology commend themselves to a sense in man which is an essential part of his high place in the Unity of Nature. The utility of these precepts, as well as their beauty, is a consequence of that unity. It is the necessary consequence of their conformity to great spiritual laws, and our appreciation of them—even when in practice we cannot reach their elevation—is the result of an original structural

adaptation which has indeed been marred, but which has never been destroyed.

There is one master service that the ethics of Christian theology have rendered to mankind, respecting which it is not easy to determine how far the innate moral sense of man could ever have done for him what Christianity has done. And yet this service has been rendered on a subject which, in the highest degree, concerns his interests and his life. That subject is the relation of the sexes. Amongst the lower animals it is regulated by instincts which seem never to go wrong. Among men, whether we look to the hideous practices of savage life, or to the still more horrible vices of civilized societies, there really seem to be no restraining or guiding instincts at all. Nor is reason adequate to supply their place. The consequences of vicious conduct are too far out of sight to impress the mere understandings of mankind with any adequate power. And yet there are natural laws upon this subject which vindicate themselves by the most fearful sanctions. There can be no doubt that a very large part of the diseases which afflict and torment human life, have originated, and are perpetuated from generation to generation, by natural causes arising out of vices of a kind that produce their own inevitable disastrous results. The teaching of Christian ethics, on this subject, goes to the root of the matter, and insists on a purity enthroned in the thoughts and intents of the heart. On this subject Christian theology rises high above even the comparative purity of the Hebrew teaching. And it

does so not by arbitrary commands, but by great general precepts founded on the nature of things. Slowly, but surely, the doctrine of Christian marriage was built up out of these materials, and it is remarkable that our Lord Himself expressly founded His teaching on marriage upon a reference to the creation of man as beginning with a single pair. That monogamy is the system which is most conducive to the increase, to the happiness, and to the virtue, of the human race, is abundantly proved by observation and experience. In this, as in many other things, human reason can recognize and can appreciate truths which it might never have been able to discover for itself. It is a case in which primeval facts must have indicated the natural law, and all departures from that law must have been due to corruption. 'From the beginning it was not so[1],' says our Lord, in condemning a system of divorce so loose and easy as practically to destroy marriage. This reference of a fundamental moral law to a fundamental natural fact, is thoroughly characteristic of Christian theology. But there are not wanting other facts to corroborate the natural law which dictates monogamy to man. The approximate equality of the sexes in birth statistics—an equality governed by no ascertained physical cause, yet, in the average, constantly maintained—is another natural fact of great significance in the same connexion. The express reference made by Christ to what was, and must have been, true 'from the beginning,' is in perfect harmony with all He

[1] Matt. xix. 3, 8.

taught. Whatever secrets are yet hid from us as regards the first appearance of man upon the earth, there is no possible scientific hypothesis which does not assume some local point of creation, or of first development, and there, presumably, he must have appeared male and female—and otherwise, potentially, what he is. Facts of this kind are the highest of all authorities. They are the foundation of primeval customs and of traditional beliefs; and we see as a fact that those races which have been least widely seduced from the acceptance and observance of them, have, as a natural consequence, become the master races of the world.

Inseparably connected with the general subject of Christian theology, is that special feature of it as a system, which attaches the highest moral value to that particular kind of belief which it calls Faith. That Christian theology does attach such value to the condition of mind to which this name is given, is indeed a conspicuous fact. Yet this feature of its teaching is often resented, as if it were not only unwarranted by any natural law, but conspicuously at variance with the instinctive allegiance which, by nature, we owe to the inherent authority of reason. And yet if we examine carefully the doctrine of Christianity on this subject, we shall find it in perfect accordance with the moral consciousness of man. If by reason we mean only the logical faculty—the faculty which expresses its conclusions by the word 'therefore'—we shall find that it never is thought of by us as involving any moral element whatever. We

never do, for example, attach the idea either of merit or demerit, to any conclusions which are forced upon us by mathematical demonstration. Neither do we do so, as regards any conclusions forced upon us by the evidence of the physical senses. The moral element comes in only in respect to conceptions which are not purely physical either in their own nature, or in the faculties which apprehend them. There is no moral element in our idea of gravitation, nor in that kind of confidence which we place in the certainty of its work. Yet the law of gravitation, as we all know, was found out by logical processes which are demonstrative. On the other hand, there is a moral element in the confidence we repose in a virtuous character, and in the certainty we feel that it will not knowingly deceive us. A reasonable trustfulness in our fellow-men is universally recognized as a virtue—and a virtue, too, which has a known tendency to justify itself. A habit of ungenerous suspicion towards others is, on the contrary, universally recognized as a vice, with a tendency, also as natural, to rouse its corresponding vices in other men.

The truth is that the ethical element enters into our convictions only when they concern and involve, directly or indirectly, the character, the conduct, and will, of living and personal agents. Their relations to us, and to the whole system in which we live, are the only region of thought in which moral sentiments can exist at all. The logical faculty may fill us with the most absolute certitude in respect to innumerable propositions, without there being in any

one of them, even a grain of that which Christian theology means by faith. The desire of knowledge is indeed in itself a virtue, when it takes the conscious form of a love of truth, and of a firm belief that every bit of truth is part of a whole that includes the region which instinctively we feel and know to be the highest. Even in the purely physical sciences we all feel that those exercises of mind which may seem, at best, to be mere imaginative conceptions, are far higher in themselves, and give us far more the idea of inspiration, than the logical processes—however laborious and difficult—by which they may become verified and established. Newton, when he conceived the idea that the force or law which on earth drew every falling body to the ground, is the same that in the heavens drew the earth's satellite in the same direction, exercised a diviner faculty of the mind than when he tried, at first in vain, but afterwards successfully, to prove the conception to be true by mathematical calculation.

The history alike of ancient philosophy, and of modern science, is full of the premonitory insights of genius, and they always excite our instinctive admiration. But neither in these, any more than in mathematical calculations, is there any ethical element whatever. And yet a high interest attaches to them as indications of the ultimate sources and of the true nature of ethical perceptions. For just as those perceptions of the intellect are the fruit of natural correspondences and adjustments between all

our mental faculties and the intimate structure of the whole natural system in which we live, so may we be confident that such adjustments do not stop at the boundary of physics. That on which goodness depends, and in which it consists, must be at least as much within the intelligibility of Nature, as the laws of matter. Not to depreciate the human reason therefore, but to exalt it, is the inevitable tendency of every proof we have of the truthfulness of our intuitions. They are as invaluable in the moral, as in the purely intellectual, sphere. But Christian theology does no violence to them in its teaching on the subject of faith. On the contrary, it appeals to them as constantly, and as habitually, as the physical sciences appeal to the self-evident axioms and postulates of intellectual truth. It asserts, on their behalf, not only a high but, it may be said, a supreme function, since it assigns to them the power, the right, and the duty, of testing what is, and what is not, legitimate authority. 'Try the spirits whether they are of God[1]' is the express direction of St. John. And perhaps there is no passage in the New Testament more striking as regards this doctrine than that in which St. Paul—the most vehement, and it may be said, the most dogmatic of all the Apostles—tells the Galatians that the facts which he had told them, and the truths which he had taught them as consequent upon those facts, were truths which were then, and for ever, committed to the keeping and conscience of his hearers as

[1] 1 John iv. 1.

rational beings who could recognize the inherent truth of them, and who, in virtue of that recognition, were bound to be so independent of all external authority, that even if he himself, or an angel from heaven, were to present any other doctrine than that which they had thus received, they were to reject his teaching as 'accursed [1].' Considering what stress St. Paul laid on the credentials of his own ministry—how assuredly he knew that it was an external voice, and no merely subjective imagination, that he heard on his way to Damascus—how he dwelt on his own consequent and total change of life—how emphatically he declared that he was constituted an Apostle, not by man nor of the will of man, but by God—it is significant indeed of the sense which Christian theology attaches to the nature of authority, that St. Paul should speak so strongly and so absolutely on the independence of the individual reason in the last resort. And yet not the less, but all the more, on this account did Christian theology maintain the doctrine also of man's responsibility for his beliefs, and of the existence of a supreme ethical element in the conception, and in the entertainment, of them.

In this combination Christian theology was in perfect consistency with itself, and with the facts of Nature. For as we have seen that the reign of law, in the only sense in which it is a reign at all, is not only compatible with a free will in man, and with the exercise of it in purpose and design, but is an absolute condition of that freedom and of any possible

[1] Gal. i. 8.

confidence in the use of means; so in the moral sphere, not less clearly, we are brought face to face with the conclusion that man's responsibility for his beliefs, is not only compatible with the authority of his reason, but is inseparably connected with it. All that Christian theology assumes in its teaching on this subject is, that there do exist in the spiritual, as well as in the material, world, a body of absolute and objective truths on which all moral judgments depend, and which we have adapted faculties to recognize, if these faculties are rightly used. It asserts that these truths are self-revealing—that they are luminous with an internal light visible to the moral sense, just as self-evident propositions are luminous to the faculties which are purely intellectual. It ascribes the rejection of this light, largely but not entirely, to an alienated will;—largely but not entirely, it is well to recollect—because it allows for ignorance, and for organs of vision that have been damaged by lack of use, or by perverted teaching. No discrimination can be more subtle than the teaching of St. Paul on the moral elements in belief. He says distinctly that those who lived outside any known and acknowledged law, were so far a 'law unto themselves, their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.' The moral sense is not destroyed merely because it is ill informed or ill directed. 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' It is in harmony with this teaching that the most solemn prayer ever uttered upon earth pleads for the forgiveness of those who perpetrated

the greatest of all crimes, upon the ground of their ignorance—that they knew not what they did.

And yet there is no concession in Christian theology to the idea that it does not signify what a man believes, provided only he believes it sincerely. As regards, indeed, the moral responsibility of the individual, it may be in a measure so ; but as regards the interests of humanity as a whole, and in the future, this doctrine cannot be rationally maintained. Truth is truth always, and every one truth is tied to other truths by innumerable links of natural consequence leading to results often incalculable and unforeseen. All men who have had occasion to watch, and trace, the causes of human conduct in history, or in the shorter experience of a single life, must have had occasion to notice the powerful influence of some one peculiarity of opinion or belief, even although that peculiarity may have lain in, apparently, the most abstract region of thought. When, therefore, Christian theology insists, as it does, on the supreme importance of truth in our religious conceptions, and on the subtle and far-reaching dangers involved in all forms and degrees of error, it does but assert a great natural law which is continually verified by the universal experience of mankind. But it does not teach us to charge upon the individual reason all the moral consequences of the errors which men may come to hold. Neither does it encourage, or justify, men in forming conclusive judgments against each other on account of erroneous beliefs. It places the seat of responsibility in those thoughts and intents

of the heart which are inaccessible to human penetration. It thus combines a reasonable ground for the largest charity, with the not less reasonable and absolute conviction of the supreme value, and critical importance, of every fragment of the truth.

As regards the fundamental conception by which, alone, an ethical element can be brought into belief, namely, the conception of a personal God as the supreme fact in Nature, Christian theology asserts, in the strongest way, the conclusiveness of the evidence on which that conception demands our intellectual assent:—'For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse[1].' This is the testimony of St. Paul to the value which he assigns to the work of reason in laying that foundation stone both of natural, and of revealed, theology. But it is the foundation only that it can lay. It is nothing more. 'Eternal power' is not, in itself, an object of love or of adoration; and accordingly, Christian theology rests its demand for these highest attitudes of mind, entirely on an appeal to other faculties than those which recognize nothing but eternal power. Of the mere intellectual conviction that a Being with such power exists, it says—with perhaps the only touch of scorn that is to be found in the New Testament—'Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble[2].' Not the bare existence, but something

[1] Rom. i. 20. [2] Jas. ii. 19.

concerning the character of God, is alone that region in our beliefs into which the ethical element finds admittance. Not in believing the proposition that 'God is,' but in believing the farther proposition that 'He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,' is to be found the quality of faith. And this distinction commends itself to our reason as founded on a law seated in the very nature of things. The highest and noblest exercises of reason are those in which it seeks and finds its own limitations. In its constant striving to push farther back its own boundaries, it may sometimes find them—in a few directions—sensibly receding. But it never finds them disappearing. And yet it knows that the region beyond those boundaries, is not empty space. It knows, on the contrary, that the greatest realities are there—those which most excite its curiosity, as they are those which most baffle its research. The ethical element of humility enters here—no cowardly surrender of inherent powers, but a truthful confession of a felt incompetence, and a virtuous submission to such guidance as may present itself with recognizable credentials. 'Neither do I exercise myself in . . . things too high for me[1],' is the expression of the Psalmist which claims this humility as an attitude of mind that is at once reasonable and virtuous. 'Lord, Thou hast the words of eternal life,' was the almost involuntary exclamation of one who heard our Lord's discourses, and whose spirit bowed before the self-evidence of their Divine beauty, truthfulness, and authority.

[1] Ps. cxxxi. 1.

The New Testament is full of passages which indicate the true ethical elements in belief, to be higher, and purer, exercises of reason than the mere acceptance of mechanical demonstration, whether of logic, or of the external senses. There is one passage in particular which is most instructive, because—whilst it places a just and a high value on external evidence—it gives a far higher rank to those faculties, far more deeply seated, which respond to spiritual truth as though organs charged with a diviner function. It is the passage in which St. Peter assures all Christian converts of his intention, and desire, to build up such external evidence of the facts of Christianity as could be afforded by the personal, and recorded, testimony of himself and of his brethren, concerning what they actually heard and saw, of the coming, and of the life, of Christ as the Messiah. But, as if conscious that all personal testimony, as to external events, becomes weakened by death and time, he tells them to dwell on another branch of the Christian evidences which he declares to be stronger still. He refers them to that mysterious body of men, unique in the history of the world, who through many centuries had spoken to the Jews on religious truth, with a power which commended itself to the intellect and the conscience of the race as undoubtedly spiritual and Divine. Comparing it with even the personal testimony of the Apostles, who were 'eye-witnesses of the majesty' of Christ, he tells them that they all had 'a more sure word of prophecy' and describes it as 'a light shining in a dark place.' Yet

not even those voices, calling through the ages—at sundry times and in divers manners—to a life of righteousness, and promising the advent of some Great One like unto His brethren, whom the world should hear—not even these voices from the past, St. Peter says, can be the highest evidence of all. That highest evidence would come, he says, to those who could wait, and listen—could wait until the light of internal evidence should shine upon them as no other light can shine, with direct and not merely with reflected rays—that is to say, 'until the day dawned, and the day star arose' in their own hearts[1].

The very beauty of this language is almost apt to conceal from us its profound philosophy. We read it as if it were some exquisite bit of poetry, which indeed it is, for the highest poetry is always the highest truth. But the beauty of it can, in this case, be traced, more easily than usual, to its perfect harmony with facts and laws which are none the less natural because they are Divine. What men call the heart, in the instinctive analysis of their own mental powers, is that organ of vision which, in the affections, is conversant with spiritual light. It is there that the dawn of ethical recognition rises. It is there that the 'grammar of our assent' reaches that kind of conviction which, beginning in intuitive perceptions and in personal experience, is established as personal love. Nothing can be more certain than that our Lord relied mainly on its own internal evidence for the acceptance of His teaching. And the nature of that

[1] 2 Pet. i. 15–21.

internal evidence He expressly declared to be that His words were not His own, but came direct from the Author of Nature, who is the fountain of all truth: 'The words I have spoken unto you are not Mine, but the Father's which hath sent Me'; and again to those who reject it, 'The word that I have spoken shall condemn you in the last day.' St. John dwells emphatically on this aspect of Christian theology: 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil[1].' Christ spoke of the demand for ocular demonstration as a demand open to some reproach: 'Unless ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.' And there is yet another of His sayings which, perhaps more than any, brings home to us in the most touching form the high ethical element that may be involved in a belief in truth as seen in its own light: 'Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed[2].'

There is probably no mind capable of understanding the meaning of this benediction, that does not also feel its beauty and its truth. It exalts—it does not disparage—reason to assign to it, as its noblest function, the recognition of internal evidence. With evidence of this kind it always does, and always must begin. But there can be no ethical element in belief unless there be also an ethical element in that which is believed. It is not that proof is wanting in those conceptions which are the special objects of faith. It is

[1] John iii. 19. [2] John xx. 29.

only that the kind of proof is changed. Another eye is opened which sees another kind of light; and those who, in other matters, are most rigid in their demands for external evidence, may, in that light, reach the highest certitudes of conviction. It was so, for example, with one of the most distinguished men of our time—one of those who has most widely influenced Christian belief—Dr. Thomas Arnold of Rugby. His passion was History, and his most intense desire was to realize and understand the great characters of the past. His delight was in the work of those who submitted the records of history to the most searching analysis, and reconstructed its materials according to the resulting evidence. Yet he was the Christian teacher who, perhaps above all others in recent years, dwelt on our knowledge of the Personality of Christ as the very soul of Christian theology, and who, on a death-bed of great agony, quoted with intense happiness the blessing pronounced on those who held to Christ with a nobler faith than that which rested on the fingers and the eyes of Thomas.

It may not be easy to define in words, but it is very easy to understand in heart, the disposition and the attitude of mind, to which our Lord assigned this special meed of approbation and of love. At the time when He spoke, His words can only have applied to an infinitesimally small number of those who have since come under the sweep of its benediction. It can only have applied to those Jews who—though His own contemporaries and countrymen—had not seen Him at all, but had nevertheless been convinced by what they

heard of His Personality and of His teaching, that He must be He that should come. This conviction could only have been reached by them through characteristics of mind and life full of the highest ethical character. In the first place, such believers must have been free from that narrow national and religious pride which was fostered among the Jews by a misinterpretation of the nature and objects of the Divine favour which had been shown to the seed of Abraham through so many generations. They must have risen above the conceptions, and the temper, of the Pharisees. They must have had a sense of the high spiritual interpretation to be put upon the glorious promises of the Prophets. They must have been prepared, beforehand, by the happy preconceptions of a holy life, to recognize in the new teaching that which corresponded to the long-predicted kingdom of righteousness and of truth. They must have been living, in short, in a consciousness of the reality and nearness of the spiritual world, and in an atmosphere of expectation founded on trust and confidence in promises which they believed to be Divine.

This was the highest ethical condition attainable in the Hebrew Church. Accordingly, we find these characteristics of individual character specified in the description, given by St. Luke, of two Israelites of that time who may be called the first heralds of the Christian Church—Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, who was a Priest, and Simeon, who is simply described as 'a man living in Jerusalem[1].' Of both of

[1] Luke i and ii.

them it is specially recorded that they were men of holy lives. Of Zacharias and his wife, who was of the family of Aaron, we are told that they were 'both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.' Of Simeon, we are told that he was 'just and devout,' and that he was one of those who lived in a state of constant expectation, 'waiting for the consolation of Israel.' No description could better bring home to us the high moral elements in the belief of those who were the first to recognize Christ as the Messiah. To both of these two men, indeed, were given those special messages from a Divine Voice, which were common in the history of Hebrew prophecy. But, perhaps, never were they given under circumstances which demanded for their acceptance a faith more firmly rooted in an enlightened interpretation of their own national history, and of those natural laws of the spiritual world which that history had embodied. Both to Zacharias and to Simeon the immediate subject of prediction was—so far as the senses were concerned—nothing but a little child. The idea of Divine purposes attained through the instrumentality of gifted men, had indeed been inseparable from the whole history of the Jews. Their great progenitor Abraham, Moses their lawgiver, Joshua their military leader, David their typical king, and all their prophets, had been examples, familiar to them, of the human personalities whom Jehovah had employed. But it needed some special enlightenment, both of mind and heart, to conceive the application of this

principle in such a form as the choice of two infant children for the fulfilment of a greater purpose than had ever been attained before. One of them was to be no less than the Messiah—of whom Isaiah had said, 'to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given.' The other was to be the herald and forerunner of this great Heir of prophecy, 'to prepare His way before Him.'

The ethical or meritorious element in the belief of Simeon—that which raised it high in the scale of faith—lay entirely in its connexion with those Divine promises which, through many centuries, went back to the days of Abraham. It is not probable that our Lord, when He referred to the evidence of the senses as an inferior element in faith, intended to include the faith of those who had indeed seen Him—but only in childhood. There was nothing visible, in that childhood, which could represent the touch and sight which Thomas had demanded. The belief of Simeon, therefore, was a pure and typical example of the highest form of faith. It is true indeed that there was nothing in itself incredible, or out of the ordinary course of Nature, in the agency indicated in the revelation made to him. We know that in the ordinary course of things there is nothing that can be laden with possibilities so immense, and so unknown, as the cradle of a child. Not only in the sacred history of the Jews, but in the secular history of mankind, it has happened, often, that great and lasting changes in the condition of the world have hung on the escape of a single babe from the many dangers of infancy and of childhood. If Simeon had believed merely that the Child

before him would one day grow up to be a great Leader, who would in his time 'restore again the kingdom to Israel'—if he had merely believed that the Child would do, for the Jewish nation, something like what had been done for the Persians by Cyrus, or for the Greeks by Alexander, or temporally for the Jews by the first of the Maccabees—his belief would still have been an act of faith, because it would equally have rested on trust in Divine promises however narrowly interpreted. But Simeon's belief in the Babe he saw brought into the temple, was a far higher act of faith, because it rose to the full height of that spiritual interpretation of prophetic promises, which identified the 'consolation of Israel' with a general redemption for the world.

There is no more beautiful passage in the New Testament than the few words of Simeon in which he expressed the reason of his delight, when—at the end of a life of waiting—he saw the Child that was to be the consolation of Israel. They are words which seem to condense, as it were, into the shortest compass all the purest moral elements which enter into the Christian idea of meritorious belief:—Thanksgiving to a Personal God for the salvation which had been long promised; a confident trust that could not be staggered by the visible appearance of that salvation in the form of an unconscious child; recognition of the fact that, in that Child, the purpose of the Almighty was being 'prepared before the face of all people'; and the triumphant assurance that it was to be not local or national, but 'a light to lighten

the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel[1].' There is often much that is selfish in what is called patriotism—much that is anything but virtuous in our self-identification with a sect, or with a nation, or even with a race. But no inferior element, of this kind, can have entered into Simeon's interpretation of the promises upon which he had lived a life of holy expectation. It may be said, indeed, that his faith was more free from any mere personal element than even the faith of Abraham, for this great father of the faithful had the stimulus of splendid personal promises set before him. A glorious posterity is an attractive prospect to all men, and most of all to men of the highest nature. If it was 'against hope' that he nevertheless 'believed in hope,' it was 'that he might become the father of many nations[2].' The belief which, we are told, 'was imputed unto him for righteousness,' was simply a full persuasion that the promise was really Divine, and that what God had promised, 'He was able also to perform.' And this, too, was Simeon's persuasion, but with no inducement to belief from any personal share in the Hope of Israel, other than that which was to belong to the whole human race. Simeon had, indeed, one help which those did not possess on whose faith our Lord pronounced His special benediction. Simeon had heard some external voice which he accepted as Divine. That voice had indicated the Babe before him as the Salvation of the Prophets. There is no reason to suppose that any such help was given,

[1] Luke ii. 29–32. [2] Rom. iv. 18.

generally, to others who came to believe in Jesus of Nazareth after His public ministry began, but who had never actually seen or heard Him. Their faith must have rested entirely on internal evidence—on their recognition of the fact that He 'had the words of eternal life.' That is to say, their faith must have grown up in minds and hearts exceptionally open to the light of truth. They must have been morally prepared to see it, and to accept it—not indeed against hope, in the sense in which Abraham had been tempted to doubt the possibility of his having the promised child, but still—against many apparent improbabilities and difficulties in the recognition of our Lord as what He claimed to be.

There has been, perhaps, no age of the Christian Church in which there have not been some special difficulties in the way of that highest kind of belief, which alone is worthy of the name of faith. But probably no period in its progress can have been so trying as the time when our Lord was yet on earth. We are told—and it is a striking fact—that His own family were not among the number of His early converts—'for neither did His brethren believe in Him.' Probably this belief may have been more difficult for them than it is for us. We must remember that His contemporaries had neither the light of prophecy nor the light of history, as later generations have had both these lights to guide them. What, exactly, the prophecies meant, was hard to be understood. The fulfilments which history was even then laying up in rich and abundant store, it was still more difficult or

even impossible for them to see, or even to imagine. Much that must have been to them purely matters of faith, are now to us comparatively matters of actual sight. We see, as a fact, that which Simeon could only trustfully believe—that the Child he saw only as a child presented in the Temple, was to be the mightiest of the sons of men in His effects upon the condition of the world, and upon the mind and souls of the human race. This is an historical and a living fact to us. But it was not such to them. Those who came to believe in Him during His ministry, and the forty days after His Resurrection, must have been guided in their belief by the purest spiritual insight, that is to say, by the habitual and conscientious culture of faculties which are the highest in our nature. It may well have been comparatively easy before His coming, to fill up the grand and attractive, but dim, outlines of prophecy, by enthusiastic imaginations. And so it may be comparatively easy, now, to dwell on the thousand different lines of fact and argument which go to make up the unexhausted total of the Christian evidences. Some of these evidences appeal to one class of mind, some to another. But a few only of such aids to faith were available to those who, in Christ's own day, believed in Jesus of Nazareth and in His Resurrection. Neither the passion of nationality, nor the passion of sectarianism, nor intellectual pride in dogmatic conceptions inherited from our fathers, not one of these—so powerful in their operation on the modern religious world—could have influenced those on whose faith our Lord bestowed

His special benediction. They can have had nothing to guide them except the high faculties whose function it is to recognize righteousness and truth. The beauty of holiness, and this beauty alone, can have been their attraction. The Sermon on the Mount must have been the teaching before which their spirit bowed. And those elements in their own character which opened their eyes to its beauty, must have imaged, in a measure, the character of Him by whom its beatitudes were pronounced. They must have belonged to those pure in heart who were to see God.

Let us remember that this is the natural law of affinity on which all our perceptions of beauty, whether in the moral or the material world, must of necessity depend. In the organic sphere, the lines of greatest beauty, are always lines of structure. That is to say, the history of things, and the reason of them, are also the beauty of them. And this is so because our sense and admiration of that which constitutes beauty, is the product of our own related and adapted mechanisms of perception. The high, and even supreme, virtue which Christian theology assigns to faith, is founded on this law, and finds in this law its adequate and reasonable explanation. Christian theology does give a supreme place to faith, but by faith it means, above all things, a reasonable faith. It is a fundamental error to think of any antithesis between faith and reason. Even if the word reason be so narrowed as to mean only the logical faculty which follows such steps of proof as are concerned in geometry, even in this meaning, there is no antagonism.

The true distinction—so often misconceived—does not lie in any difference between two reasoning faculties of two different kinds, but only in wide distinctions between the things, or conceptions, to which our one great faculty of reason, is variously applied. When applied to purely physical facts and conceptions, as it is in all forms of mathematical demonstration, it deals exclusively with matter, with time, with space, all divisible into measurable units, and the numerical relations of quantity among these units, are the sole subjects of its cognizance. Nothing can be more different from these than the relations with which reason is called to deal in all ethical, and in all spiritual, or even in all purely intellectual, conceptions. Not one of these is ever divisible into measurable units. And yet in these, equally, the logical faculty, which is the essential element in all reasoning, is the same. We cannot say that it is reason, or the logical faculty, which asks the two questions What, and How, but it is not reason which asks the third question Why. On the contrary, it is the question Why, and that question above all others, which stands to reason in the most intimate and inseparable relation. It is true that in physics the knowledge we can attain has a sharply cut definiteness, certainty, and precision, which, in its own way, delights us. When, for example, the result of calculation upon measurable units enables us to foresee the time, within the fraction of a second, when one of the planets begins to come between the earth and the sun, or when by a similar process of reasoning, on

purely physical data, men are enabled to infer the existence of another planet which had never yet been seen by human eyes, we are filled with a sense of wonder and of satisfaction. But in direct proportion to these characteristics of precision and certainty in our physical knowledge, stands out the narrowness, and the mechanical nature, of it. Even in its own narrow sphere, we are often painfully conscious of its limitations; and it is our reason which tells us of them.

But it is not even the limitation of our physical knowledge which is the most characteristic fact about it—it is the utter irrelevancy of that knowledge as regards the highest quests of reason that is most impressive. And here again it is our reason—our logical faculty in the strictest sense—which tells us of that irrelevancy. The metaphors of language do indeed indicate a sense of some far off and dim analogies between the conditions of physical, and of moral, reasoning. Thus the strength of a beam, or of a wall, to resist strain, is a purely physical problem soluble by mathematical calculation in terms of measurable units ; whereas the strength of a human character to resist the strain of temptation, is a problem in which calculation of this kind is of no avail. But it is the business and function of our reason to deal with the one kind of problem as well as with the other. The elements which it has to handle are different, but the sequences and processes of thought, in both cases, equally, belong to logic. The word 'therefore,' or its equivalent, as expressing the tie

between premises and conclusions, is of frequent occurrence in the theology of the Hebrews, as applicable to spiritual things. 'Thy word is very pure: therefore Thy servant loveth it[1],' is the reasoning of the Psalmist. The devotion of all the powers of life to the service of God is represented by St. Paul as 'our reasonable service[2].' The appeals to reason, both in the Old Testament and in the New, are as continual as the demands on faith. They are invariably regarded as complementary, and never as antagonistic.

The merit which Christian theology ascribes to faith is founded on the fact that true faith is the highest exercise of reason. It can only be reached as the result of the fullest working of all our rational powers. This is true even when the logical faculty seems, as it were, to lay down its arms in favour of authority. For this it may most rationally do when it feels its own incompetence, or its own incompleteness, or the insufficiency of the data with which it is supplied. Accordingly one of the most meritorious elements in faith is a rational humility, that is to say, a humility founded on the evidence of consciousness, which is perpetually telling us of the limitations upon our own intellects, both in respect to power, and in respect to opportunity. Christian theology never asks us to be disloyal to our own reason, or, in a cowardly spirit, to abandon its endeavours. What it does ask of us is to accept the testimony of consciousness as to its weaknesses as well as to its strengths.

[1] Ps. cxix. 140. [2] Rom. xii. 1.

We are called upon to do this continually in the affairs of life and in the domain of the physical sciences. Probably there is no man who in some one or more of these branches of knowledge, does not feel himself to be as helpless as a child. To all men who are not themselves mathematicians, the triumphs of the human reason, for example, in astronomy and in the higher physics, may seem nearly inconceivable. Therefore even within the scale and stature of our common humanity, there is nothing so reasonable as humility. When the average mind compares itself, for example, with such another mind as that of Sir Isaac Newton, it must, at least in some measure, feel what limitation and weakness mean. They do not mean an incapacity for knowledge. But what they do mean is the incompetence of certain particular methods of attaining it, and the necessity of resorting to a method which is different. We must accept continually the instrumentality of minds, other —higher and richer—than our own. In other words, we must make use of authority, as we all habitually do in nine-tenths of all the beliefs on which our daily life depends.

But this is a beginning only in the great lesson of humility—a lesson in which we have a great deal more to learn. The sense of our dependence upon minds other than our own, in respect to the whole cycle of knowledge embraced within the physical sciences, is a sense which reaches its highest development when we consider the narrow limitations within which these sciences are themselves confined. De-

pendent as we are upon other minds even in respect to them, the sense of a still deeper dependence comes over us with overwhelming force when we discover that, on all the higher and more ultimate questions on the nature, origin, and goal of things, our greatest authorities in physics are, so far as their discoveries are concerned, as helpless and as ignorant as ourselves. There is not one physical discovery yet made which casts the least light upon these questions. Belonging as they do to another sphere of thought, they stand untouched behind, and beyond, all the ascertainable laws of visible phenomena. The solution of them remains always as far off as ever—that is to say, so long as we employ only the same instruments of research. It is this which widens the area, and deepens the character, of our reasonable humility, transferring it from ourselves, individually, as compared with the giants of our race, to the whole human family and to the universal intellect of man, as compared with that prevailing mind in Nature which it is our intense, and instinctive, desire to understand. The humility which is praised in Christian theology, is not a humility of feebleness, or of abdication, disparaging to the relation in which we stand to the highest subjects of our spiritual desires. It is a humility which is consistent with the doctrine of the Hebrew Psalmist, that man has been made only 'a little lower than the angels'—that, in his nature, he has been 'crowned with glory and honour'—and that, by special gifts and faculties for the acquisition of physical knowledge, he has been 'set over the works of the Creator's hands.'

Never has this power and prerogative of man been more conspicuous than in our own time. Never has the growing knowledge of physical facts, and laws, yielded such rich returns, in our larger dominion over them. Never has the precision, and certainty, which belongs to our knowledge of them, reflected more clearly that character of invariability of all material laws which alone can make them the trustworthy, the supple, and the subtle, instruments of mind and will. This subordination of invariable laws, is the law of laws—the *Lex Legum*—the constitutional principle, as it were, to which, in a universal kingdom, all its special and separate statutes are subordinate. This is the universal principle which we see governing all things, and especially the use made of those rigid exactitudes of relation which prevail between the measurable units of force, or energy, of time, and of space. It is in the perception of this universal truth that the physical sciences do help us to feel that we are indeed 'crowned with glory and honour.' There is no man of science worthy of the name, who does not value scientific truth entirely irrespective of the effects it may have in 'setting us over the works' of creation, so far as mere economic applications are concerned. These effects are all very well, as incidental consequents. But there is no branch of physical science which does not yield conceptions extending far beyond the region of material utility, and there are others, not a few, from which no such benefits have yet come at all, or are ever likely to accrue. Yet it is in these conceptions, most of all,

that we do feel to be crowned with glory and honour, when we desire and rejoice in the knowledge of them for its own sake. It may even be said that it is in the highest sense of all that we feel ourselves to be set over 'the works' of the material creation, when, in terms of our own intellectual and moral nature, we can trace the relationship in which they stand to the universal Mind. This is the natural law governing the rank that belongs to our knowledge according to the rank of the things it knows. This is the natural law on which the doctrine of Hebrew and Christian theology takes its stand, when it declares, in the words of Jeremiah, 'But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord [1].'

We have seen how, in descriptive science, the apprehension of this Mind is so instinctive, and universal, that words and forms of speech implying it, and expressing it, cannot be avoided even by those who resist it most. It is the real cause and explanation of the feelings of awe, or of admiration, or of reverence, with which both natural phenomena in themselves, and the triumphs of those who discover the laws of them, are regarded. If there be such a Mind, it must be the highest knowledge to be conversant with its character. There is no glory or honour in knowledge, except in proportion to the grandeur, the majesty, and the significance, of the thing known. Neither is there any ethical value in it, except in like proportion to the bearing of it upon heart and

[1] Jer. ix. 23, 24.

conduct. Even the knowledge of individual truths which, in themselves, are of high importance, may have a deteriorating rather than an improving effect upon the character of him who knows them, unless that knowledge has an ethical superstructure built upon it. It is in this sense that Christian theology declares 'that knowledge puffeth up'; and this doctrine it applies, as we have seen, even to such an important item of knowledge as the nothingness of idols, even at a time when its own struggle against idolatry was yet an undecided contest in the world. St. Paul[1] lays down the principle that knowledge of the nonentity of idols, was a knowledge barren and misapplied if it led Christians, through pride, to forget another truth, viz. that the beliefs of other men, however false, were facts to be reckoned with in the conduct of life, and that love or 'charity' towards them, demanded a due consideration of the effects of that conduct upon their ignorance and superstition. The whole passage is indeed a striking testimony to the true nature of the ethical element in the Christian idea both of knowledge and of faith. It puts the mere intellectual conviction of any truth, however important in itself, altogether on a lower level than convictions awake to moral concomitants, and moral consequences, and alive, not less, to the ignorance which all true knowledge brings home to us, out of its infinite suggestions.

The knowledge of our own ignorance is the highest kind of knowledge, for this kind of knowledge does

[1] 1 Cor. viii. 1–9.

not puff up. On the contrary, it generates humility. The greatest minds in the history of science have been minds of singular, and of a strictly natural humility. It was their knowledge that made them conscious, above all things, of the narrow boundaries within which physical science is confined. They have felt continually the truth of St. Paul's words, 'If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know [1].' The context of this powerful sentence explains the sense in which it is to be understood. It does not mean merely that all our intellectual knowledge is incomplete. Still less does it mean that our knowledge, so far as it goes, is in itself fallacious. It does not mean, merely, that our knowledge, for example, of the law of gravitation, leaves us in utter ignorance of the physical causes to which its energies are due, and that our knowledge of the still more mysterious agency of light, leaves us in an ignorance, if possible, still more profound on its ultimate physical causes. It does not mean merely that the man who is proud of the little that he knows, in utter forgetfulness or ignorance of the deeper things of which he knows nothing, is a man who 'knows nothing as he ought to know.' All this, no doubt, is true, and is covered and included in the far-reaching sweep of the sentence. But, beyond all this, there is another, and a deeper, meaning in it, which goes to the root of the ethical element as that element is understood both in Hebrew and in Christian theology, when the highest sense of

[1] 1 Cor. viii. 2.

it is intended. St. Paul was not thinking or speaking of any physical knowledge when he declared that any man who prided himself in the mere intellectual conviction of any truth whatever—without having any sense of its relation to, or bearing upon, other truths connected with life and conduct—was a man who had no true knowledge at all. St. Paul was thinking and speaking of the conviction that 'an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.' He was therefore expressly speaking of the most fundamental of all truths in theology, the very central idea alike of Christian and of Hebrew worship and belief. Yet it is of this proposition that he represents the mere holding of it as an intellectual proposition, and in a proud and self-satisfied spirit, as unworthy of the very name of knowledge as understood in the Christian system.

Nor does he fail to specify the element that is wanting. True knowledge, in the language of theology, must engage the emotions of the heart, as well as the faculties of the understanding. There are indeed many things in the knowledge of which, the affections can have no part. The physical forces, and their elementary laws, are all among the number. But that higher knowledge which concerns the relations of mind with mind, is inseparably connected with the heart. In particular St. Paul impresses on his brethren in the Christian faith, that the knowledge of God could mean nothing but the love of God. He puts this kind of knowledge in sharp contrast with that other kind which would leave men 'knowing nothing

as they ought to know': 'But if any man love God the same is known of him.' An explanation follows how, and why, it is, that this supreme ethical element is a natural and necessary part of the Christian conception of the Godhead. That conception is not that of some bare abstract monotheism, but of a living and personal Being standing to men in the nearest of all relationships of life:—'But to us there is but one God, the Father[1].' To this conception, essentially and in its nature ethical, he adds the highest intellectual conception which is attainable in philosophy, namely, that of the immanence of the Divine Spirit in all that we call Nature:—'Of whom are all things, and we in Him.'

It is impossible to read this argument of St. Paul on the place assigned to knowledge in Christian theology, and on the ethical elements which belong to it, without seeing that he regards the whole system of Christian teaching as a rational system, and one capable of a reasonable explanation. That is to say, he regards it as resting on well-known facts, and laws, of man's intellectual and moral nature, which cannot fail to be recognized as self-evidently true, when men are reminded of them. It is a fact that we know our knowledge to be limited, and it is a farther fact that the consciousness of this limitation ought to generate, and in the highest characters does generate, a natural humility. It is a fact and a law of consciousness that we never do, or can, attach the idea of merit to mere intellectual apprehensions such as those which belong to the physical sciences. It is not less

[1] 1 Cor. viii. 6.

a fact of that consciousness, that the sentiment of love and of ethical obligation, can only be attached to knowledge of a Personal Being—to our relations with a Character, and not to our relations with a bare abstract spiritual Existence. It is a fact that the omnipresence of a Mind of which our own is in some real sense the image, is, as we have seen, an indelible impression on us in our interpretations of all natural phenomena, as these are seen both in us and around us. It is a fact that the idea of sonship in our relationship to that Mind, had been borne in even upon heathen poets and philosophers, so that the Fatherhood of God was a Christian and a Hebrew doctrine in perfect harmony with rational conceptions. In particular it was in perfect harmony with that confidence in the intelligibility of Nature which is the basis not only of all knowledge but of all desire to know, or to look on anything with other eyes than those of the beasts. The very word intelligibility has no meaning except the possibility of reducing the facts and laws of Nature into terms of human thought and of human emotion, and nothing can be more striking than the complete and uniform assumption of St. Paul that all the great conceptions of Christian theology are not only, in this sense, intelligible, but are in a special and structural harmony with the highest faculties of our nature.

It is the custom of all the sacred writers, and of St. Paul especially, to connect every doctrine or spiritual truth, and even every exhortation on the conduct of life, with some general principle or law

lying deep in the very nature of things, on which the truth of the doctrine, or the virtue of the exhortation, is represented as depending. Moreover, it is the rule that every principle or law so quoted and defined for this purpose, is invariably appealed to as in accordance with the testimony of the human conscience in proportion to its enlightenment or its powers of spiritual perception. Of the teachers of no other religion, can this be said. It is a characteristic which separates Christian theology from all other theologies in the world. It has not only constituted the strength of that theology in the past—accounting for all the triumphs it has already won—but it assures us also of the inexhaustibility of its triumphs in the future. Nature, in its physical aspects, is universally recognized as boundless in its field of knowledge, and still more in its mental or spiritual aspects. The same infinite horizons must be recognized as stretching out everywhere around us, and within us. Accordingly, it is the habit of the apostolic writers to see, and to dwell upon, the many profound analogies which connect the phenomena of Nature, including the instincts, the habits, and even the customs of men, with the spiritual laws of an everlasting kingdom. It is thus that in writing to a community, which was accustomed to the great athletic contests of the Isthmian games at Corinth, St. Paul refers to the long, and careful, and self-denying discipline practised by athletes in order to fit themselves for the great prizes of success. He points it out as an example of a great general law prevailing in the

spiritual, as absolutely as in the physical, world—the law, namely, of the adaptation of special means to the attainment of special ends. But this again implies the farther teaching that a life of faith, in the Christian sense, is a life of difficulty, and of contest—a doctrine, be it observed, in perfect harmony with the definition of true knowledge as something very different from mere intellectual convictions, which might be good for nothing but for puffing up.

It is in farther pursuit of this line of thought that St. Paul enters upon that incomparable description of Love or Charity as understood in Christian theology, which is one of the splendours of the New Testament, even if we were to regard it merely as a literary passage of great power and beauty in ethical philosophy[1]. It is a description which stands in close connexion with the whole subject of this work, because it is a striking exemplification of the coincidence between the root ideas of Christian theology and the universal perceptions of our human nature. If we examine closely, and, one by one, the characteristic fruits and products of charity as understood in that theology, and as here given in abstract by St. Paul, we cannot fail to see how perfect and how attractive such a character would be, in the estimation even of what is called the world. Those fruits and products are not indeed an exhaustive list or catalogue of human virtues, nor does the passage purport to give any such catalogue of ethical obligations. What it does is to indicate and describe a certain general

[1] 1 Cor. xiii.

disposition of heart and soul from which there always does, and there must naturally, proceed a great number and variety of beneficent effects on the whole range of thought, and life, and conduct. Negatively, it is described as extinguishing a multitude of sins which do most embitter the world—impatience, irritability, jealousy, pride, and suspicion; whilst, affirmatively, it is represented as determining the mind to be generous in its interpretation of others, hopeful, and trustful, of all good elements in them, and, in all things, rejoicing in the truth.

In this grand delineation we rise above the atmosphere, not only of observances, but of all mere precepts and commands, into the higher and purer air of one great effective cause in the spiritual world—one which can be truthfully described as above many others, chiefly because it includes them, and resolves them into itself. For this is the obvious explanation of the lower rank which St. Paul assigns both to faith and hope, in comparison with the all-embracing influence which he ascribes to charity. It is not possible to divide the faculties or operations of the human mind, under separate names. Each and all of them need the co-operation of others. St. Paul describes charity as 'hoping all things'; and therefore when he says that charity is greater than hope, he must mean that it is greater because the greater must include the less. And so with faith—charity is greater, because, as he describes it, charity is especially spoken of as exercising that kind of discriminating belief in all recognizable good, which is in itself of the nature of

faith. And so, again, of knowledge—charity must be greater than knowledge, because some knowledge must be involved in every exercise of charity or of love, and the attribute of 'rejoicing in the truth' specially ascribed to charity, is an attribute essentially belonging to knowledge, and to the faculties which are concerned in its pursuit. But the superiority which the Apostle ascribes to charity, he, above all, explains and defends upon the ground of its everlastingness. It can never be superseded. It will be for ever what it is now. It is not a mere item of knowledge, nor a mere act of faith. It is a disposition—a condition of soul—a quality of all those elements in our mental constitution out of which are the issues of life.

It is in explaining this distinction that, as usual, the Apostle takes occasion to indicate a great natural or inherent law, which governs every attainment of knowledge that is possible to us, and stamps upon it a comparatively provisional character. That law is that 'we know in part' only. This is no philosophy of nescience. It is not agnosticism pushed to that 'madness of extremes.' But it is the truth out of which that false agnosticism has been an erroneous suggestion. The uniform teaching of Christian theology, is that our knowledge, so far as it goes, is true knowledge, although always only partial and incomplete. This is a fact of our consciousness, and in the history of the physical sciences, detailed illustrations of it have been frequent. The three laws of Kepler concerning our planetary system, were true knowledge. But they have been merged and lost, as it were, in the higher knowledge of

the facts which rewarded the genius of Sir Isaac Newton. The Newtonian law of gravitation, is itself, now, in the same stage of partial knowledge which was before occupied by the discovery of his great predecessor. And if ever the Law of Gravitation should come to be physically explained, that explanation will again, in its turn, be only another link in a chain which passes out of sight. Christian theology, therefore, in applying the same law of limitation to our spiritual knowledge, is founding itself strictly, as it always does, on the analogies of Nature as these are known to, or are recognizable by, us. It does not disparage our faculties. It only puts them under a reasonable discipline, and it specially encourages them in that hope and desire of knowledge, which is the noblest and most significant of our natural endowments. Nothing can be grander than St. Paul's interpretation of the meaning, and the end of our desire to know, in its true relation to that limitation of powers which he asserts as a universal fact. That interpretation is simply this—a future as yet unfulfilled—and an absolute assurance that it will be fulfilled somehow, and somewhere: 'For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known.' This is indeed a standard of knowledge, than which nothing higher can be conceived. Yet this is the standard of hope and of faith which is lifted in the sight of all men by the apostolic writer who, more than any other, except St. John, has so expounded Christian theology as to place it on the firmest basis of natural and necessary laws.

Chapter IX.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

PRAYER.

Inseparably connected, in Christian theology, with the virtue and the power of Faith, stands out, in corresponding prominence, the idea of the duty, and of the efficacy, of Prayer. There are two very different aspects of the recognizable relation in which this doctrine stands to the reign of natural and universal laws. In one of these aspects, that relation is simple and obvious—in the other, that relation constitutes one of the greatest difficulties of modern thought. It will be well to look at these separately, for they are not only widely different, but they are even opposite and antagonistic.

The first, and most obvious, relation of prayer to natural laws, is simply one of fact—the fact, namely, that, in some form or another, the impulse and the desire to pray, are as universal among men as the existence of the religious instinct. It is the inevitable product of that sense of weakness and dependence on mental or spiritual agencies other than our own, which is intuitive and universal in the human race. Sacrifice, in all its forms, is essentially an act of prayer. How many forms that act has taken,

through the ages, and among different tribes and nations, it would be impossible to enumerate. Some of them have been, and as in Africa still are, horrible and cruel almost beyond conception. Others have been in themselves so comparatively harmless that, as we have seen, St. Paul declared that Christians might innocently partake of meat offered to idols, unless the act could be so misunderstood as to have bad effects on other men. Sacrifice was an established part of the worship of Jehovah in the Jewish ritual. The fierce denunciations of idolatry, in all its forms, which never ceased to be poured out by the Hebrew prophets, never had, in them, the least ingredient of disparagement towards the idea or the practice of prayer, or of any notion of the inaccessibility of the Divine Nature to this method of approach. What drew forth the denunciations of the prophets was —not that the heathen nations prayed or sacrificed, but that they prayed and sacrificed to false gods—to the works of their own hands, or to the fictions of their imaginations. St. Paul puts this view strongly when he says that 'the heathen sacrificed to devils and not to God,' and when we think of the unnatural horrors of cruelty which were, and still are, common in connexion with the rites of sacrifice among the heathen, the idea of the influence of wicked spirits, rises more terribly upon us than in connexion with any of the other phenomena of human corruption. But neither the prophets, nor the Apostles, ever thought for a moment of discouraging that natural and universal instinct of men which leads them to pray. On the contrary, the

doctrine of the Godhead being accessible to human supplication, ran through and through the whole theology of the Hebrews. It was, indeed, inseparable from their very conception of the Personality of Jehovah, of His relations with the personality of men, and of His character in His dealings with the government of the world. The Old Testament, from beginning to end, is full of examples and instances of prayer, that is to say of direct supplication, sometimes alone, sometimes in combination with praise and thanksgiving. The patriarchs, the kings, the prophets, and the singers of Israel, were all moved to pray. The historical books narrate it as a fact; the prophetical books contain it as an essential element in the hopes and promises of the future; the Psalms are in themselves largely prayers, and nothing else.

Nor is it possible to separate or define the objects of prayer which all these examples include. We cannot distinguish between temporal, and spiritual, benefits, because in the laws of Nature these are inseparably interwoven, and the great lines of Hebrew theology follow faithfully the lines of fact in that one and universal dominion in which Jehovah reigned. The body, and the soul, and the mind, of men, are in far too close a union to make such discriminations possible. And all these, again, are so married to conditions in the external world that neither can they be classified apart. Success in war, for example, was essential to the highest spiritual aspirations of the Jewish people. Direction and success in virtuous love, might well be an essential condition in building

up the family of Abraham, and the beautiful story of the choice of Rebekah as the wife of Isaac, is a perfect example of the Hebrew idea of the providential leadings of the Most High in the blessings of individual life[1]. The Hebrew prayed for everything that he desired in life—for everything, that is to say, that he felt to be in itself innocent, according to the moral law as known to him. The Almighty was universally regarded as working invariably by the use of means. But He was regarded, also, as having His hand always on the most direct springs of ultimate causation. Above all, He was regarded as having, in supreme measure, that power of free will which, as possessed even in a limited degree, is the highest gift of man. This freedom is, with us, an ultimate fact of consciousness. Upon it the very existence of moral responsibility depends. The Hebrews never doubted that in this—the greatest of our endowments—we are made after the image, and in the likeness, of Him who is our Creator. They never thought of Him whom they knew as the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, as the heathen world thought of Olympian gods, as subordinate to the fates. The doctrine of Necessitarianism, in all its forms, was unknown to them. Their own moral nature did not suggest it—neither did the moral government of the world, in so far as it was to them conceivable. Free wills open to the influence of motives, and one Supreme Will open to exercise a righteous judgment upon such motives, and upon all the contingencies of voluntary conduct

[1] Gen. xxiv.

—these were to them the great facts, and the great law, of the spiritual world.

It is true that immutability was an attribute assigned to God. But the sense in which it was understood, involved the most absolute assertion of freedom in the administration of righteousness and truth. Justice and judgment were described as the 'habitation of His throne,' and these attributes must involve, in the very nature of things, a free access to all the elements of perfect knowledge, and a free will in assigning a due value to the conduct of voluntary and responsible agents. It is a conception essentially natural in this sense—that it assumes the exercise of the highest human faculties, in the discharge of their highest functions, to be the best representation we can form of the Divine Being in the administration of His own Divine Laws. And the explanation is plain. It was God's character, not His acts, which Hebrew theology regarded as immutable, and assuredly any other idea of that immutability would be irrational. An immutable character must be capable of change in its attitude, and in its conduct, towards the evil and the good. It cannot be the same to rebellion and to obedience; to wickedness and to repentance; to malignity and to love. It must therefore, above all things, be accessible to supplication, and to those 'turnings of heart' among the disobedient to the wisdom of the just[1], to which the prophets were perpetually calling, and inviting, all whom they addressed. The natural response to these invita-

[1] Luke i. 17.

tions was always prayer—prayer in the form of confession, of repentance, of promise, and of supplication; and so much did Hebrew theology dwell on the accessibility of God to prayer, that the Psalmist addresses the God of Israel as the Hearer of Prayer, as one of the most glorious of the names by which He can be known, and as indicating that attribute of His nature which is most attractive, and will ultimately have an all-prevailing power: 'O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come[1].'

It is needless to say that Christian theology not only adopted to the full, but deepened and extended, the teaching of the Hebrews on the duty, and efficacy, of prayer. The constant practice of it by our Lord himself, and the continual exhortation of His Apostles, can leave no doubt as to the fundamental importance which they attached to this form of direct communion with the Godhead. It is certain, too, that they did not conceive as possible any such definition of the objects of prayer as could enable us to draw a sharp and definite line between legitimate and illegitimate petitions—such, for example, as a division between spiritual and temporal blessings. And this is the more remarkable as prayer is the only spiritual act and duty, on which our Lord, in response to a direct appeal, did give an actual form or model for imitation. 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples[2],' this was the request which produced what has ever since been known as the Lord's Prayer. The wide comprehensiveness of its character has been

[1] Ps. lxv. 2. [2] Luke xi. 1.

universally recognized in the Church, although it has never been considered as condemning, or even as superseding, more detailed petitions in harmony with its spirit. What that spirit is, as casting light on the very nature of prayer, and on the spiritual facts and laws on which it depends, is revealed in its opening words. These words express, and explain, that one great fact which renders prayer intelligible as a duty, and possible as a power. 'Our Father which art in heaven' are words which at once establish the idea of Christian theology as to man's relationship with the Creator. It is the relation of sonship on the one side, and of parentage on the other.

If it be possible, at all, for human reason to reach any conception, or to frame even any guess, on that which it does most earnestly desire to know, namely, its own origin or source, this is the most natural and rational conception it can entertain. It was actually the conception reached by Greek philosophy, and we know the powerful use which St. Paul made of it in his speech at Athens. Nor need we doubt its substantial truth because it contains some elements of metaphor. If we are to doubt the truth of any of our conceptions on this ground alone, there will not be much left for us either to know, or to believe. Without perception of the subtle analogies of Nature, there is little, indeed, that we could understand, and almost nothing that we could express. The whole structure of human thought, and of human speech, is built up out of the materials they supply. Bounded as our faculties undoubtedly are, the boundary is

always indefinite, and seems as if it were pierced by many openings. None of these are so wide, or so accessible, as the openings afforded by analogy. The mind sees and feels instinctively those resemblances between things inside the visible horizon, which carry their powerful suggestions very far beyond it. There is nothing so penetrating as a real, and true, analogy. The unity of Nature—that is to say, of the whole system of things visible and invisible—is our sure guarantee for this. And, therefore, no presumption lies against any conception merely because the expression of it, has to be eked out by recourse to elements of metaphor or analogy. The conception may overpass those elements—that is to say, they may be inadequate to cover all that the conception involves, or all that the mind struggles and labours to express. And very easily may this be the case with the metaphorical element in that conception of our origin and source to which our Lord gave His sanction in proclaiming the sonship of man and the Fatherhood of God. It is a true conception, but we may well surmise that it is even less than the full truth—an approximation to it only—if in its fulness we could conceive it. Not only the dim glimpses of our spirit—but even the lines of rational speculation, and the language of Christian philosophy, point to a connexion of which mere human affiliation can give but an imperfect idea. The boundless Christian hope of knowing 'even as we are known,' implies a nearness on the part of the Divine Being, such as does not exist in earthly parentage.

But all these considerations do but tend to impress us with the idea that whatever element there may be of metaphor in the Fatherhood of God, is an element which does not exaggerate, but falls short of the truth as bearing on what may be called the philosophy of prayer—that is to say on the relation which it bears to such facts and laws as we can discern in the spiritual world. If the relationship in which man stands to God, must be even nearer and closer than that of sonship—some relation of absolute derivation and dependence for which we have no name—it affords a rational explanation of one of the most universal phenomena of human life. It becomes intelligible why it is in the nature of man to pray, and why it is in the nature of God to hear. There is a remarkable passage in one of the writings of St. John which seems to cover at once all the human perplexities, and all the Divine hopes, connected with the relationship of man to God. On the one hand the Apostle feels all the wonder that is natural in thinking of a creature such as man now is, being spoken of as the offspring of God: 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God[1].' On the other hand, he feels and recognizes a still higher aspiration of which even this near relationship is but an imperfect image: 'and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.' Then follows the conclusion reached by that triumphant faith, which is founded on the natural law of assimilation effected through the agency of a closer spiritual

[1] 1 John iii. 1.

communion, and of a more perfect vision: 'But we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him,' with the reason given, 'for we shall see Him as He is.'

If, again, we pass from the opening address of the Lord's Prayer, to the condensed and concentrated petitions that follow, we shall see that the whole vast region of possible hope and of expectation is included in them. The very first petition is 'Thy Kingdom come.' If, only, we remember what the meaning of God's Kingdom was in the language of the Old Testament, and what were the additions made to that meaning in the discourses of Christ himself, we may be able to form some idea of the all-comprehensiveness of this one petition. In the theology of the Hebrews, the Kingdom of God meant nothing less than a reign of universal righteousness, and of absolute truth. Under the full dominion of that Kingdom, the earth was to be covered with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea. All through the Prophets and the Psalms, the resources of human speech seem to be exhausted in expressing this idea in every variety of aspect. But to these conceptions Christ Himself added another, which contributes largely to the intelligibility of the truth by establishing an inseparable connexion between God's Kingdom and each individual human soul, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.' This was the new idea, or at least the new explanation given, of the nature of the Kingdom. It lifted the old conceptions, at once and for ever, above the mere

conditions of place and time. It seated the image of God's Kingdom in the whole nature—that is to say, in the whole affections and the whole intellect, of man.

It is not necessary to assume that this is the only sense in which the same words can be ever used. But if it be not only one sense, but, as our Lord implies, one of the most important of all the senses, in which the Kingdom of Heaven is to be understood, then, consequences of corresponding importance follow. If the domain of God's Kingdom is specially in the mind and heart of man, then, the laws of that everlasting and universal Kingdom must have the closest relations with the very structure of his whole moral and intellectual faculties. His instincts, however perverted in actual use, and however misguided in particular directions, must have had their own source in the nature of things, and in the system of these things they must have their own legitimate functions to discharge. They must be convertible to uses which are good, and capable of being turned into directions which are right. This, at all events, is the doctrine of Christian theology. It is verified as such on the authority of Christ. It is obviously a doctrine founded upon the conception of a natural and necessary law binding together, in an inseparable unity, the Supreme Mind and the mind of man in its natural and original constitution. The very idea of a Kingdom, is an idea taken from human life and government; and, although the analogy is imperfect, its incompleteness obviously consists in this, that the subjects of a human ruler are not in such

near relations with him as to be called his offspring. Nor, even if human subjects were the children of their rulers, does this similitude come up to the deep realities of a relation which makes men the creatures of a Being, who is above all things their Creator, and, only as such, their King.

The intelligibility, therefore, of divine laws, to the mind and heart of man, and the cause of that intelligibility, is the assumption which is more and more brought out by every analysis of the language of Christian theology. This, at least, is one aspect of it, whilst another, and not less important aspect, is the Divine origin which that theology attaches to all the fundamental conceptions of humanity as derivations from the rock whence man was hewn, and of the hole of the pit whence he has been digged [1]. In this lies the deep significance of all the language of Christ, and of His Apostles, which assumes and involves the idea that the natural laws of the Eternal Kingdom under which we live, are in accordance with the instincts and impulses of the human mind, in so far as these are original and uncorrupted. This is indeed the one constant presupposition underlying the whole system of Christian beliefs, but it is nowhere so urgently and expressly taught as on the subject of the duty, and of the efficacy, of prayer. These conceptions are enforced not only in the many examples of prayer recorded both in the Old and in the New Testament—not only in the composition of those prayers, and in the benefits sought—not only in the reiterated injunctions to

[1] Isa. li. 1.

pray, which are the continual themes of apostolic teaching, but in the special endeavour made by our Lord himself to bring home to the popular understanding, the principle, or the law, on which prayer depends. That principle is that the Free Will of man is, in its own small measure and degree, a real image of the Free Will of God, so that He is accessible to supplication, even as men are accessible to the appeals of their fellow-men.

For the purpose of impressing this principle on His disciples, our Lord does not hesitate to appeal to human feelings and experience even when the analogies referred to are approximate, and partial only. It is thus that in the parable known as that of the 'Friend at Midnight[1],' the success sometimes achieved by importunity is used as a lesson on the duty of perseverance; whilst the urgency of the appeals for bread addressed to a human father, is used in the same connexion—to encourage confidence in the response, which may be expected from the Fatherhood of God, when our petition is for that communion with the Divine Spirit, which is the natural, and appropriate, sustenance of the spiritual life. The very fact of any argument being used at all on such a subject, is in itself a proof that, in Christian theology, prayer is considered as a practice susceptible of a reasonable explanation; whilst the nature of the argument, in itself, is equally a proof that the corruptions of our human nature, however great they may be, are not such as to destroy the fundamental analogies

[1] Luke xi. 5.

between the movements of its good affections, and of its really enlightened will, with those of the Universal Mind. The argument used by Christ in the conversation on prayer recorded by St. Luke is an argument *a fortiori*. It does take cognizance of the unlikeness between the Divine, and the human, mind, which sin and evil have established. But it does not use either the corruption of man's nature, or the limitation of its powers, as precluding all possibility of reasoning from human to Divine things. On the contrary, it uses what remains of goodness, and of compassion, in human character, as the nearest type of the same characters exalted to an infinite degree in the character of the Father: 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?'

The relation, therefore, in which the Christian idea of prayer, stands to the idea of a universal reign of Law, is a relation not only of perfect harmony, but of an inseparable unity. It assumes the existence of that supremacy of Mind and Will of which we are conscious as the ultimate agency in ourselves, and which, as we have seen, are the universal objects of recognition in what we call external Nature. It assumes that this supreme Mind and Will, act on motives which are intelligible to us in proportion as we know them, and that they act, always, by the adaptation of means to ends—these ends, also, being intelligible to us in proportion to our knowledge of them.

[1] Matt. vii. 11.

It assumes that the Almighty is not the servant of what we know as natural laws, but the Author and the Master of them. It assumes not only that He is, or exists, but that His existence is not like the existence of a physical force, but means the ubiquitous presence and power of a Spirit with a character and qualities related to our own. It assumes that one of these qualities of character, is to be the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. It assumes that the universal practice of prayer, and of sacrifice, among men, is but the natural expression of an instinct which in itself is true and good, however more or less perverted in its application through the ignorance and corruption of mankind. It asserts that in the life and death of Christ, the Divine and human nature were united, in a sense, and in a measure in which they had never been united before, and that 'a new and living' way of access has been opened up, through His means, between men and the Father of Spirits. It explains that natural and universal sense of dependence upon unseen agencies, which has been considered as the essence of the religious sense in man, by asserting it as a fact that 'every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights[1].' It treats the unchangeableness of the Divine character, not as a discouragement, but as an encouragement, to supplication. It regards, not as a ground of alarm, but, on the contrary, as a ground of confidence, the fact that with the Father of lights 'there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'

[1] Jas. i. 17.

In the whole of this teaching Christian theology is in complete harmony with facts and laws which are thoroughly intelligible to the human understanding. An unchangeable character must, in virtue of its own nature, change its attitude and conduct towards changed, and changing, men. The good and perfect gifts of the Creator can be withdrawn, or, on the contrary, they can be multiplied and enriched, according as rebellion or obedience calls, each, for its appropriate response. The freedom of the Divine Will is asserted absolutely. To the pure initiative of that Will, the Apostle ascribes that knowledge of the history and of the power of Christ, which he identifies with the 'Word of Truth [1].' If gifts of such supreme value had been, as it were, spontaneously given to men, the Jewish converts of the Dispersion were encouraged and commanded to seek, through prayer, for a still more perfect knowledge: 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him [2].' And yet even to this promise a condition is annexed, thus maintaining the contingent character of all voluntary action as an essential characteristic of the Divine, as it is of the human, Will. The condition, on the part of the worshipper, is that he shall have that full belief, or persuasion, in the power and goodness of God, which, in Christian theology, is called faith, and without which it is obvious that prayer would be only a mockery of Him.

We must now turn, however, to that other aspect

[1] Jas. i. 18. [2] Jas. i. 5–7.

of the relation between the doctrine of prayer and the conception of natural laws, to which reference was made as not only different but antagonistic. This is very necessary, because we shall not have sounded the depths of the Christian philosophy of prayer, even to the limited extent of line which our faculties can supply, unless we try to estimate those depths by another method, and from another point of view. New and special difficulties have arisen in our time, and in many minds, which were unknown to the ancient world. These are suggested by conceptions arising out of the immense development of the physical sciences, and particularly out of the misunderstandings of the word law, as understood in their domain. I have dealt with these misunderstandings in the first work of the present series, *The Reign of Law*, and the conclusion arrived at in that analysis, seemed clear and certain—that the rigid uniformity of strictly physical laws—taken singly and not in their combinations—is not only no impediment in the way of Free Will in purpose and in action, but is an absolutely essential condition of that freedom, as supplying the only means by which purposes can be effected. But however clear the results of that analysis may be, and however familiar they are in our own daily life, the old temptations of the human mind to believe in fatalism, or in the doctrines of Necessity in some form or other, are always breaking out afresh. In reality, they are essentially, and equally, antagonistic to any belief in the efficacy, even in ourselves, of voluntary effort of any kind whatever. They would

make it as useless to make known our requests to our fellow-men, as to make our requests known to God. If everything that is done, or happens, is pre-determined, then, the actions of men are as much parts of a necessary sequence, as the movements of a steam engine. It is ignorance only that can induce us to ask anything of them. But as this conclusion is contrary to the universal instincts, and the equally universal experience, of mankind, the doctrine is not so pushed as to include the human will, but is kept for speculative application to the Will of God alone. This, it is conceived, is helpless, or, if capable at all of what is known to us as voluntary and contingent action, is capable of it only in some sense which does not render it possible for Him to vary by a hair's-breadth from some predetermined course. This modern form of fatalism, is probably more destructive to belief in prayer, than the older forms of the same creed, which it has superseded, and which it hardly recognizes as—what they are—the same. In the older forms, it never did succeed in wholly suppressing prayer. The instincts, and the traditions, of men, have been too strong for that. But in our modern society it is to be feared that the fatalism born of misconceptions on the very meaning of natural laws, has actually been strong enough, in only too many minds, to suppress altogether any recourse to prayer[1]. The natural

[1] See the confession made by the late Dr. Geo. J. Romanes in his *Thoughts on Religion* on the effects produced on himself personally during his Agnostic phase: "Even the simplest act of will in regard to religion—that of prayer—has not been performed by me for at

emotions and impulses which prompt to that resource, are treated as the mere results of ignorance, and although even the speculative reason cannot do any of its work except by the aid of instinctive perceptions, it is always aspiring to kick down the ladders of its own ascent, and to repudiate intuitions with which its speculative theories cannot be reconciled.

To many, however, who intellectually are possessed by the new theory, the consequences of it are too painful, and too unnatural, to be endured. The head and the heart are set at hopeless variance. The result is a compromise—the aim of which is to satisfy the instinct which cannot be suppressed, without contradicting too absolutely the intellectual conception which sits like a nightmare on the mind, and puzzles or benumbs the heart. This condition of mind is probably far more common than the consciousness of it, and still more common than any expression of it. Yet if such a mind did express itself freely, its language would be nearly such as I have once heard actually held, with perfect simplicity and frankness, by a singularly cultured and active mind:—'I cannot believe that prayer can ever affect the course of any events. That course is determined by inexorable laws. Still, when I am in trouble, either through actual or impending sorrow, I always do pray—simply because I cannot help it. But nevertheless my conviction is that it can never be of any use.' Then, others again, dissatisfied as they may well be with this avowed but

least a quarter of a century, simply because it has seemed so impossible to pray, I cannot will the attempt' (p. 133).

intolerable contradiction between their feelings and their intellectual hypotheses, have constructed, or tried to construct, a theory of reconciliation. That theory rests on an attempt to draw a fixed line of distinction between spiritual and physical effects. Nothing physical—no external or material event or cause—can possibly be changed. But spiritual effects may be produced. Thus praying may have a good effect upon ourselves. In this way it may be of use, but in no other.

This appears to be a common refuge, now. But what is the relation in which it stands to that larger and more general conception of the universal reign of Law, which it is supposed to save, and to respect? It is in the most profound and violent contradiction to any intelligent understanding of that conception. It assumes that the ultimate agencies which work in the physical world, are not spiritual, and that there are no laws in the spiritual world having any analogy with those which prevail in the world of matter. But this assumption is contradicted by everything we know of the system in which we live, including the knowledge we have of our own conscious relations with it all. Then, again, the idea that any spiritual good can come to us from pretending to ourselves that we believe in supplications which we think must, of necessity, be useless—is an idea in violation of spiritual laws which are self-evidently true. It is like expecting to gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. That prayer to God should be nothing but preaching to ourselves,

is a supposition irrational enough. But to believe that even this preaching can be good, when it is consciously framed on assumptions which we ourselves believe to be erroneous, is an idea not only so irrational, but so immoral, that it cannot possibly be entertained or acted upon by any honest or earnest mind, when its true character has been grasped. If, therefore, prayer is to be retained at all, it cannot be on this theory, because, if for no other reason, it does —and does in an extreme degree—the very thing which it is invented to avoid. It is thoroughly inconsistent with the very idea of immutable laws existing in the spiritual world, and is in contempt of some of these laws which we know best in our own dealings both with ourselves and others.

Further, it is to be observed that the doctrine of Christian theology on the subject of prayer, does not, as a matter of fact, give any support to the theory that legitimate and illegitimate petitions in prayer, can be sorted, and discriminated, by drawing some clear-cut line of division between temporal and spiritual benefits. It is true, indeed, that in the Lord's Prayer, there is only one petition which, directly and immediately, asks for the possession of material things: 'Give us each day our daily bread.' But even if this petition were to be so literally understood as to refer to nothing more than the barest modicum of food needed for the support of life, still we must remember that it involves the co-operation of a whole cycle of operations and of causes which are as purely physical as all such combinations must always be.

And when we reflect that at least the petition must be regarded as not confined to the individual who prays, but to the whole brethren of mankind, we may form some estimate of the immense extent and complication of the purely physical agencies which this one request asks the Almighty to employ, for filling the mouths of men with food, and their hearts with gladness. Not only the return, in due course, of fruitful seasons, but—at least in this modern world—the growth and development of all those conditions of society on which the demand for labour depends, are all included in the scope of this one petition.

But there is more than this to be said of the condemnation, involved in the Lord's Prayer, of the idea that the 'Father of lights' ought never to be asked for temporal things, because He never can, or never does, interfere with some other agencies more powerful than Himself, the existence of which we choose to imagine, and which we call natural laws. The other blessings, besides daily food, which the Lord's Prayer does also make the subject of petition, are all equally comprehensive of, and dependent on, innumerable physical conditions. That God's Will should be done on earth, even as it is done in other regions of Intelligence, where no rebellious wills have been set up against His own, is a petition which cannot, in the nature of things, be granted without changes involving a vast co-operation of both physical and spiritual conditions in bringing them about. It is clear, therefore, that whatever may be the intellectual difficulties which affect our full comprehension of the relations

between the Divine Will, and the possibility of it being at all affected, or determined, by contingencies of any kind, or especially by the supplications of His creatures, are difficulties from which there is no escape by imagining an absolute distinction between spiritual and material benefits. We know enough from our own consciousness, and from our own experience, to be sure that no such distinction exists in Nature. We know that, within our own comparatively narrow sphere of voluntary action, and, above all, in our own organism considered as a mechanical structure, there is some close connexion between the two spheres—a connexion so intimate that they seem to be inseparable; and we have seen how the universal subordination of matter to mind, and to the characteristic phenomena of combinations with a view to Purpose, are so instinctively impressed even on minds strongly prejudiced against such perceptions, that they dominate the whole language of descriptive science.

If, therefore, we desire to find some principle of separation between legitimate and illegitimate petitions in prayer, we must turn from definitions, which are mechanical and artificial, to principles of distinction which are rational, and in conformity with all that we know of natural laws governing the spiritual world. And this is, in a great measure, possible, if we follow the indications of Christian theology. It is true that we have no systematic treatment of the subject in the sacred writings. That is not their method of dealing with any question. But we have

numerous actual examples of prayer, on every variety of occasion, from the days of Abraham to those of Christ and of His Apostles; and we have also a great number and variety of observations upon prayer, and of precepts in regard to it, which throw much light upon the subject. The whole of this evidence is consistent with the general idea that the government of the Creator, over the creation to which we belong, is a rational government, ruled according to laws intelligible — not to this or that separate faculty alone, but—to the whole of our intelligence, and therefore in harmony with the whole intuitions both of the heads and hearts of men.

Sometimes, in the New Testament, as in all Eastern writings and discourses, special aspects of the truth are enforced in the language of hyperbole, for the purposes of emphasis, or of compelling attention. Our Western habits of thought, and our more prosaic forms of expression, do not always lend themselves to a right understanding of such passages as these. Very probably no one of our Lord's hearers, when He told them that faith could remove mountains, would even for a moment understand Him to mean literally that if any one of them believed that his own prayer could remove Mount Lebanon from its foundations, and could cast it into the Mediterranean, these effects could actually be produced. And so there are various passages in the Apostolic writings which lay some special stress, now on one, now on another, of the conditions of devout prayer, according as they seemed appropriate to the immediate occasion, and

to the particular Church which was addressed; and all of these passages may need a thoughtful and reasonable interpretation. Our Lord himself warns men against 'vain repetitions' as partaking of the heathen notion that they will be heard 'for their much speaking,' or of that other heathen notion, that the Father does not know what we have need of before we ask Him. These are condemnations of formal, or mechanical, or superstitious and ignorant, elements in prayer. His Apostles enlarge on the spiritual conditions which can alone make prayer a spiritual power. St. John seems to lay great stress on personal holiness of life in those who pray, and, having, perhaps, in his mind rather the ideal, than the actual, character of any Christian community, he says, 'Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight[1].' St. James dwells on its power in the healing of the sick, and says, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much[2].' In St. Paul's mind the functions he assigns to prayer, are as vast and various as the applications of every great spiritual truth must always be in such a mind as his. In writing to the Church at Ephesus, where he describes himself as having 'fought with beasts,' he dwells naturally on the impediments and dangers which there opposed the progress of Christianity in the world, on the 'principalities and powers,' on 'the spiritual wickedness in high places,' against which

[1] 1 John iii. 22. [2] Jas. v. 16.

he and his brethren had to keep up a continual, and a most arduous, contest. From this point of view he enjoins the use of constant and earnest prayers of intercession for all saints, and especially for himself, that he might have the gifts of strong and courageous utterance in making known the 'mystery of the Gospel[1].' St. Peter, in addressing the 'stranger' converts scattered through Asia Minor, speaks of them as a 'spiritual house, and a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ[2].' In none of all these references to prayerful worship by the different Apostles, is it possible to separate between temporal and spiritual benefits. In the triumphs of the Christian Church on earth, these were inseparably blended, the one class of agencies being the means and instruments by which the other was obtained. In not one of these various utterances on the subject does the idea seem to have been even present to the mind of the sacred writers, to draw up any abstract definition of the objects of prayer. They evidently regarded it as applicable, not only to the whole sphere of human activity, but to all the activities of the Divine Nature, and character, in the government of the world. Only in one solitary passage of the writings of the beloved disciple, do we find even the indication of any general principle applicable to all religious supplication. But in that passage we do indeed find a principle as intelligible, as it is full of immense significance. It is the

[1] Eph. vi. 18–20. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 5.

passage in the First Epistle of St. John, where he defines the nature of the confidence that we ought to have in God: 'And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His Will, He heareth us[1].'

It is impossible to conceive any announcement upon the most difficult of all subjects, which takes more obviously than this, the form and character of a great natural law in the spiritual world. Nor is it possible to conceive of one which appeals more directly to the reason and conscience of mankind. No man could ever dare to ask of God anything which he knows to be in itself wrong, and therefore displeasing to the Divine Will. And if that Will is understood as a Will of perfect truth, and perfect justice, as well as perfect love, then, the law laid down by St. John would rule out of the range of our prayers any petition which, so far as our knowledge goes, could possibly be inconsistent with a dominion of perfect righteousness. This is obviously an ethical boundary, or condition, applicable to all prayer. But the law laid down by St. John extends beyond this boundary, and establishes another much farther off—more elastic—and in its very nature less accessible to our vision, or to our organs of understanding. If the Divine government be, as it most clearly is, a government only comprehended in part, and that a very small part, there may be many petitions in themselves innocent so far as their moral character is concerned, but which are, nevertheless, not accord-

[1] 1 John v. 14.

ing to the Will of God, for reasons which we cannot know. What we ask may be, in itself, unreasonable, as interfering with the stability of laws on which many immensely greater consequences depend. Other petitions, again, may be impossible, in the only sense in which that word is applicable to the Divine Being —as when it is said that 'it is impossible for God to lie.' And this kind of impossibility may, and indeed must, have a very wide application. Farther, it may be quite possible for us in many cases to see that results that are distressing to us, are unavoidable, whilst, equally, other results that would rejoice us, are unattainable, according to all that we know of those laws of Nature which are laws of God. In all such cases we should instinctively feel it to be unnatural, and unreasonable, to pray for benefits which we have good grounds to know do not fall within the definition of St. John, as being 'according to His Will.'

The reasonable inference would seem to be, that in all our petitions we should make this great reservation indicated by St. John, as one that may be needed in a thousand cases where we do not absolutely know that it actually applies. Accordingly, it is the teaching of Christian theology that prayer should always be, in this sense, contingent. We know this upon the highest of all authority—the actually recorded examples of prayer in our Lord's life and death. The model prayer which He dictated to His disciples has been always known as in a special sense the Lord's Prayer. But some of His own special prayers have been handed down to us in apparently literal

reports. As such they are invested with a supreme interest, and a supreme authority. We see, in them, how absolutely our Lord conceived the Divine Will to be the one ultimate and determining power in the course of things: 'Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done[1].' And yet even in those prayers, we have the same supreme testimony given to the place and function of voluntary action as involved in the Divine Will and sanctioned by it: 'Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour[2].'

It is true that in these words we are brought face to face with conceptions which involve the greatest mysteries of the Divine Being. But they are, not less, the greatest mysteries of our own. All sorts of suggestions may occur to us in our intellectual struggles to reconcile ideas which seem to be contradictory. We may think, for example, that prayer is reduced to a nonentity when it is represented as availing only in procuring occurrences which have been already otherwise determined. But this idea is negatived by our own consciousness—fortified by all experience and observation—that our own wills have a real effect on the course of things. Under these conditions the solution presented by Christian theology is the only solution which has a rational character, that is to say, a solution consistent with natural facts and laws, as known to us. It is consistent, on the one hand, with the universal impression made upon us by the system in which we live, that there is

[1] Matt. xxvi. 39. [2] John xii. 27.

a large area of causation in which, and over which, we have no power whatever. It is consistent, on the other hand, with the conception that there is, so to speak, another large area of contingency, in which we possess a delegated power of more or less effective action, and that in the whole of that area, our own wills, and our own characters, can, and do, enter as an element into the finally determining, or ultimate, Will of our Father which is in Heaven.

Nor need we allow ourselves to be troubled by another suggestion of the speculative faculties, which has occurred to many, namely this—that what we may call, and think to be, an area of real contingency open to supplication, is, in reality, an area of necessity or of predetermination quite as much as any other, only concealed from us by our own ignorance of necessities which are hidden. The accusation against prayer, or the misgiving in respect to it, is, that in our imaginations as to contingency, and the freedom of voluntary action, we always have to retreat into some dark regions of the unknown, where alone we can even profess to find it, since in every other region, in proportion to our knowledge, we feel and know the iron rule of predetermination and necessity. This has been often said: but it has been said in complete contradiction of the most certain knowledge that we possess. There is nothing we know so securely as our own consciousness of the freedom of our will, for upon this consciousness our whole plans of life depend, as well as the very possibility of passing moral judgments on our own conduct, or on that of

others. That region, therefore, is not dark, but, on the contrary, more full of light than any other, from which we derive our conception of the constitution and course of Nature. Moreover, the area of this source of knowledge, is not only very large and wide, but it is the region in which the highest, and most governing, agencies of the universe are seen and felt to work. It is the very region in which these agencies are seen to be using the subordinate implements of necessity, and the obedient rigidities of force, as the ministers, and tools, of purpose.

But although Christian theology enters upon no abstract theory on the philosophy of prayer, and not only admits, but enforces, the truth, that we are, and must be, largely ignorant of what may, or may not, be according to the Divine Will, its injunctions and its examples on the subject of prayer, leave no room for any uncertainty whatever as to at least one great spiritual law applicable to this question, which is eminently intelligible to our understandings, and not less satisfying to our heart. It is this: that the Will of God is a holy and perfect Will, always identified with what we know as truth, justice, righteousness, and love. Everything, therefore, that, according to the measure of our lights, we may think and feel conducive to the triumph of these qualities in the external or in the spiritual world—every combination and concurrence of causes and events which can tend, however feebly or remotely, to the coming of that Kingdom in which they rule supreme—must be appropriate objects of prayer. This is the definition of

an area as large as the whole world of thought, and as practical as the whole world of action. Nor need we feel any paralyzing doubt lest what is human is necessarily false—lest the imperfections and limitations under which our estimates of goodness must necessarily lie, involve, of very necessity, elements which, in themselves, must be false and wrong. Our Lord's prayers are eminently human. They not only assume contingency in the action of the Divine Will, but they assume that we can understand some, at least, of the conditions which may enter into its determinations of perfect justice, and of perfect compassion. The last prayer which Christ uttered upon earth, except that in which He resigned His Spirit, is a prayer which assigns a special reason for one petition, as being a reason which would be operative on the Divine Mind, because it was according to His Will. And that reason is one which commends itself to the moral conscience of mankind: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' No conceivable petition can enforce more clearly the teaching of Christian theology, that what appears to us—despite all our limitations, and even despite all our conceptions—to be just and righteous, is at least presumably cognate to considerations which do also enter in the determinations of the Divine Will, and is conformable with its eternal laws.

Then there is another aspect of the doctrine of prayer in Christian theology, which establishes, still farther, its rank and place in that sense and perception of cause and effect, which is the fundamental condi-

tion of all our knowledge, whether in religion, or in that which is called science. That aspect is this: that the legitimate field of prayer is identified with the whole of our own sphere of action, and of thought. If the kingdom of God, even in a subordinate sense, lies within the minds and hearts of men, then, the coming of that kingdom must be advanced by everything that can enlighten those minds, and elevate those hearts, in the knowledge and in the love, of truth. And this doctrine must have an universal application to all knowledge, which is really such—that is to say, to all knowledge which deserves the name—the knowledge of things in their true relations to each other, to ourselves, and to the Supreme Being. For, if in another sense, as Hebrew and Christian theologies have continuously taught, the kingdom of God be the kingdom of truth—absolute, universal, and all-prevailing truth—then, is every effort we make, whether in the intellectual or in the moral sphere, consecrated as an effort which must be, so far as it goes, according to the Divine Will. This is a conception which explains and justifies the joy, and the instinct, of all mental exertion which is conscientious and sincere. It convinces us, moreover, that such exertion is open to all, even to those of meanest natural endowments, so far as mere intellectual gifts are concerned. The very sight of goodness, is, in proportion to its goodness, a power in the world. This is a fact verified by all experience, and establishing a law in absolute accordance with the teaching of Christian theology, that the kingdom of heaven is seated in the enlightened and

obedient hearts of intelligent and moral beings. In the whole province, therefore, of our voluntary activities, which is a province of immense and unknown extent, wherever those activities are directed with wisdom, and animated by Christian love, we may be sure of prayer as an agency, to which great promises have been given.

The speculative theories of Necessity may tell us that in this we can be only instruments; but not even these theories can deny that our instrumentality is voluntary and conscious, and that, within a certain sphere, it can, and does, produce great effects. Neither can they throw any doubt on our conviction, which is instinctive, that the Almighty must have other instruments than ourselves wherewith to work His Will. This is undoubtedly the teaching of Christian theology; and it is not only free from the least antagonism to every rational conception that we can form of the Reign of Law in Nature, but it is in strict conformity with that conception when it is subjected to a strict analysis. Whatever real difficulties there may be in the comprehension of the ultimate truths of Nature, due to the limitation of our faculties, it is certain that there are many unreal difficulties, which we entirely make for ourselves by the careless use of indefinite and ambiguous words. The word 'motive' is one of those. It seems, somehow, to be thought and conceded, that it is impossible to reconcile the idea of a free will with another idea, equally certified by the facts of consciousness—namely this, that in action our wills are decided, or, as it is called, deter-

mined, by what we know as motives. And this difficulty would be real if the word 'motive' could only be applied to a mechanical force as a cause of material motion. But the truth is, not only that the word 'motive' can be applied to a totally different kind of agency, but that it is specially so applied in our habitual conceptions, and in our common use of speech. The motives which influence our wills are not physical forces, nor are they anything in the least degree like them. On the contrary, what we call a motive power in mechanics, is separated by the whole width of conceivable existence, from those thoughts and intents of the heart, which tell upon our wills, and 'move' them to voluntary action. There is no likeness between the inducements of the spirit and the tractions of an engine, or the expansive forces of a vapour, or the energies of falling water. These, and such as these, are the motive powers in Nature, and the masses of matter which they are competent to 'move' have no option in the movements they are compelled to take.

It is nothing but a most careless blunder if we allow ourselves to be deceived by the distant, dim, and partial, analogies at which the speech-making instinct in man has clutched in order to bridge over the chasms of thought which yawn between the phenomena of matter and of mind. What we—for want of a better image—call the motives which act upon our wills, and between which they must decide, have, in themselves, the quality of good and evil as judged by knowledge and by conscience. A motive power in

mechanics can never be either good or bad. But the motive powers in mind, are the very seat and centre of all that we know of goodness, and of vice, in ourselves, and in other men. This is an ultimate fact beyond which we cannot get. But it is a fact so universally and so instinctively recognized, that, in our judgment on others, and on ourselves, we never do, practically, allow ourselves to be deceived by those confusions of the speculative intellect by which, in the highest regions of religion and philosophy, we try to escape from inconvenient beliefs. Nothing can be more irrational than the idea that mind cannot be considered free unless it be inaccessible to such motives as love, or justice, or veneration, on the one hand, and to their opposites, on the other. If it were not accessible to such motives, it would not be mind at all, either as known, or as even conceivable, by us. Assuredly, the supremacy of natural laws in the government of the universe, is a conception, which is not only consistent with this truth, but which absolutely demands the recognition of spiritual motives as an essential characteristic of mind, and as the highest agency in the universe. In nothing does the philosophy of Christian theology vindicate more clearly for itself its supreme comprehensiveness and authority, than in that teaching which affirms of certain motives that their 'service is perfect freedom.'

There seems to be one passage, and only one, in the whole of the sacred writings, including the books both of the Old and New Testaments, in which the word 'law' is used precisely, or as nearly as

possible, in that sense in which it is now most generally used, in the philosophy of the physical sciences. In that sense the word 'law' denotes in any thing, or in any combination of things, an inherent and necessary tendency to produce, as their cause, certain definite and characteristic effects. The only passage in which 'law' is used in this sense by any authoritative writer on Christian theology, seems to be the passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in which he deals with certain peculiarities of the human character and will, and especially with the antecedent conditions under which its freedom and responsibility are called to act[1]. The Apostle examines by introspection, as it were, his own spiritual structure, just as a naturalist might examine, on external evidence, the tastes, appetites, and habits, of some other animal. He declares that he sees and feels as a fact, in the phenomena of his own personal experience, what may be called a dual nature—one of them he speaks of as seated in his bodily members, the other of them as seated in his mind or spirit. He is sensible of their frequent, if not of their continual, antagonism. The promptings of the mere physical nature, with its corresponding appetites, constitute one set of motives which he feels and sees to be comparatively low, whilst the aspirations of the other nature, rise towards all that is Divine. So strong is this higher nature in him that he is able to say, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man.' But yet he feels, none the less, the power exercised

[1] Rom. vii. 14-25.

by the lower motives, coming from the lower nature, to impede or pervert his better will—a power so great that he confesses, 'The good that I would, I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do.' He declares that the facts, of which he is thus conscious, can only be described as 'a law in his members warring against the law of his mind,' and bringing him into captivity to sin.

This is an accurate, and a philosophical, account of the facts which establish what is called, in Christian theology, the corruption of human nature. That nature is not represented as irredeemable. It is represented, on the contrary, as not only capable of delighting in that which is the highest conceivable object of love and of adoration, namely, the law of God, but as holding these elements of character in the deepest-seated recesses of its structure, even in what St. Paul calls 'the inward man.' Only, it is overlaid, and so largely overweighted, by tendencies of an opposite character, that the balance falls on the wrong side. Nothing can be more certain than that this is a rational account of the facts which everywhere encounter us in human life. It is an explanation, in terms of natural law, of all the conscious wickedness of mankind—that is to say, of all failures to act up to such standard of morality as may have been established among them by knowledge or tradition. Low as that standard may be in particular times and places, the conduct of men tends to be lower still, 'their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.' It is a fact, too, that the higher the

standard is—all the more conscious do men become of their own failures to attain it.

It is impressive, indeed, to find this consciousness so highly developed in the writer of the Epistle to the Romans. There is probably no human character known to us in the history of the world, which it is so difficult to think of as yielding to the lower, and resisting the higher, elements of its own nature, or acting in violation of its own deeper convictions, as the character of St. Paul. With a powerful intellect and a fervent spirit, by education and training a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and jealous for 'the Law' as the glory of his nation, his vehemence in opposing and in persecuting the new sect of the Nazarenes, has all the appearance of conduct dictated by a most natural, however misguided, sense of duty. And equally does his course, subsequent to his new convictions, seem to be the course of one whose actions ran always, and ran with resistless energy, along the lines laid down by the highest voices of his 'inward man.' Yet this is the writer who lays bare his own conscious experience of life as giving him, above all things, a sense of difficulty in fighting the good fight of faith, because of natural facts and laws affecting all human minds, in their present condition, which tend to deflect the action of their wills in wrong directions. We do not know what his special temptations were. They may have been connected with that very zeal with which he himself tells us that he persecuted the Christian Church, and which became a glorious virtue when it was directed to better purposes. There is nothing

more probable than that some one, or more, of the internal evidences of the truth of Christianity—perhaps even some of the external evidences—had dawned upon his mind before—perhaps long before, he had allowed himself to think seriously of them, or to give more than a passing heed to the smothered misgivings of his heart. This would fully explain the meaning, and the special significance to him, of the mysterious words which he heard on the way to Damascus, and which do undoubtedly seem to refer to a long and a hard struggle against suggestions of his inner man: 'It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.'

If this be so, it would account most naturally for another feature in the teaching of St. Paul, and that is the constant stress he laid on the virtue of humility. This is not a virtue which seems to have been specially natural to the personal character of Saul of Tarsus—as tenderness was personally natural to the character of St. John. But it may well have been impressed upon him by his painful experience of that natural law which he describes with such subtilty of analysis in his letter to the Romans. It gave him a far-reaching lesson in the depths of that theology which he was commissioned to teach, and which he has taught with a power of penetration, and a variety of applications, which stand pre-eminent among all the Apostolic writings. Not only his recollection of past temptations, but his sense of their continual presence—his power of tracing them to a general law deeply seated in certain corrupt affections of the human heart—all this had a natural connexion with his new conviction of the only

remedy—and that was the spiritual aid of that Divine Person in whom he had come to believe as the Messiah, so long promised to his race, and in whom not that race alone, but all the families of the earth, were to be blessed. Nothing can be more clear than that his mind was filled with the idea, that, as the evil in the human heart had an intelligible origin, so also, an intelligible remedy had been provided for it. His sense of the deep-seatedness of the evil, is, indeed, so intense as to be nearly overwhelming. He evidently regards it as innate in the present condition of humanity, and under this sense he is moved to one of the most passionate utterances that ever came even from his fervent nature: 'Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' and, in reply to this question, he looks to the natural resource of that kind of external aid and help which all men, in some form or other, do instinctively seek for, under such mental conditions. And that help can be no other than the help of another mind, greater, and better, than their own. It is, therefore, strictly according to the analogies of natural law in all mental trouble, that he answers his own question, as to any possible deliverance, by the thankful recognition of Him in whom he had come to believe as the Messiah, 'I thank my Lord Jesus Christ.'

The human spirit always could hold, and often had more or less actually held, communion with the Spirit of the Father. But a new channel for that communion had now been opened up in the life and death of Christ. Humility was one main condition of it,

hardly separable from faith. St. Paul urged men to be 'instant in prayer,' and he did not pretend to draw any dividing line of definition between legitimate, and illegitimate, petitions. Leaving that to the conscience of men, in so far as moral elements can determinate it, he encouraged them 'in all things to make their requests known unto God.' He associated himself with the humblest of those whom he addressed in saying that 'we know not what we should pray for as we ought.' But he added, with absolute conviction, that the God with whom we have to do, is not only accessible to supplication, but desires it on the part of those who love, and seek, Him. The blessed attribute of sympathy is ascribed to Him in that perfection of power which, in all things, is His alone. For this quality in the Divine character, he finds expression in the strongest image which language could command; seeing that he speaks of the 'Spirit helping our infirmities with groanings that cannot be uttered.' Nothing could be more natural, in the highest sense, than the whole of this teaching —that is to say, nothing could be more accordant with the laws which we can ourselves recognize as established in the spiritual world, and by which we do ourselves—when at our best—try to regulate our conduct towards our own kind.

Chapter X.

CHRISTIAN BELIEF

IN ITS RELATION TO PHILOSOPHY.

THE harmonies of Christian teaching with all that we know, or can recognize, as the eternal laws of Nature are innumerable. The theme is inexhaustible. Far too little has been thought or said of the Christian Faith considered simply as a system of philosophy. No greater mistake can be committed than to suppose that any treatment of it in this sense, must involve some compromise of its other, and higher, claims. It is true that the word philosophy has been 'soiled with all ignoble use'; and that even where this would be too severe a sentence on that use, it has still been often appropriated to the most fanciful and flimsy structures of the abstracting faculty, or of the speculative imagination. But we must never forget that the original meaning of the word denotes no less than the love and desire of knowledge in that largest sense which is identified with the pursuit of Wisdom. It represents the constant struggle and desire of men to bring their own thoughts and conceptions more and more into conscious correspondence with the system of the universe in which they live. There can be no

higher aim than this. It affords room for the exercise of all the most powerful faculties we possess. It is an aim which not only must include theology, but must regard it as the central and ultimate object of attainment. If there be a universe at all, the great endeavour of philosophy must be to conceive how its unity can be made intelligible, and on the other hand to understand how it is that, in some aspects, it so often appears as if it were divided.

This is the great question of all questions with which, as a fact, Hebrew and Christian theology does specially and continually deal. This is the question for the solution of which it does present a well-compacted system of thought, larger, wider, more definite, and more consistent, than any other which the world has known. We have only to compare it with the sacred books of the East, and with the more systematic philosophies of the West. There is no need to disparage any of these. As products of the religious consciousness or of the intellect of man, they are witnesses of the highest value to the right interpretation of a world in which that consciousness and that intellect are, after all, the highest created things. It is a fact, and an invaluable fact, that in the sacred books of many nations there are to be found thoughts and reflections which are both profound and true. Over these it is not uncommon to see scholars bowing down in raptures of admiration. The more of them we can collect the better; and the more we admire them the better, provided only that we take due note of all the characteristic facts and circumstances

affecting their position and occurrence. One of those facts is invariable—that such thoughts and reflections are but scattered and isolated utterances standing in no organic connexion with any wide or firm structure of wisdom and knowledge. The other fact is—that these thoughts or reflections are invariably but pale and imperfect counterparts of the same truths which are grasped more firmly, and are expressed more powerfully, as parts of an all-embracing system of beliefs, in the theology of Christ.

This may be said with emphasis of those marvellous schools of philosophy which have won for the Greek race an imperishable name. Everything that was of solid value in their guesses, intuitions, and reasonings —and there was much—has been, as it were, absorbed and lost in the vaster volume of harmonious conceptions concerning the nature of the Divine government, which flows through the history and teachings of Christianity. Those teachings rejected nothing that was true, come from what source it might. They rejoiced in the light of Nature, and in the light of mind as a part of Nature, wherever even one ray of that light could be detected shining on any of the difficult paths of thought. It is well to remember that Aristotle, who flourished three centuries and a half before the birth of Christ, remained, for 1,500 years after that event, so much the cherished authority of the Church on many questions of abstract thought, that he was called by the greatest of Christian poets, 'The Master of those who Know.' Nor ought it to be forgotten that some of the thoughts,

and some of the language, which were evolved from the teaching of Plato, are thoughts and language which were caught up, and glorified, in the magnificent prologue to the Gospel of St. John.

It may confidently be said that there is not a single conception that is distinctive of any of the leading schools either of Greek or of modern philosophy, and that has, at the same time, some real place, however subordinate, in the substructures of universal truth, which does not also find its own appropriate position in the penetrating and capacious system of Christian thought. The philosophy which made much of Innate Ideas may well be satisfied with the faith which teaches that the fundamental postulates of reasoning are among our Creator's good and perfect gifts, and that we possess nothing—in this category, any more than in any other—which we did not receive. The philosophy of Experience, which dwells exclusively on the reaction between outward things and the conceptual faculties to which these outward things are organically related, will find a congenial home in that cherished doctrine of Christian theology which dwells on the power of habit—on the discipline of training—on the verifications which follow on obedience—on such an announcement of natural law as that 'light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart.' One of the most striking sayings of Epictetus, the Roman Stoic, has been reported in these words: 'for of this be well assured, there is nothing so tractable as the human soul[1].' It is in connexion with this

[1] Epictetus, Book x.

thought that the same philosopher gives a description, at least of the possibility, of that complete change of life and character which is associated with the Christian doctrine of Conversion, and of which, in practical life, we seldom or never hear except in connexion with the experience of Christ's disciples. The philosophy, again, which identified the Beautiful with the Good and with the True, is amply provided for in that teaching which dwells continually on the beauty of holiness[1], and holds out as the highest prospect of spiritual enjoyment the seeing the King in His beauty[2]. The philosophy which sees in the Useful the essence of the Good, is but a broken fragment of that infinitely larger thought which regards as inseparably united the very idea of utility and the results of a perfect obedience to the laws of righteousness and of truth. Even the lowest of the great Greek philosophies—that of Epicurus—which made enjoyment the one great end and aim of life, does not find itself thrown completely out of that all-embracing Christian conception which declares that the chief end of man is to 'glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever.' Given a right estimate of that in which happiness consists, Christian philosophy has nothing to say against the conception that the possession of it must be the great object and desire of all sentient beings. But everything depends on that estimate being right. It is in the uplifting of it to the highest levels of spiritual conception, so as to render it adequate and true, that the Hebrew and Christian teaching stands—not only

[1] 1 Chron. xvi. 29. [2] Isa. xxxiii. 17.

pre-eminent but—alone. And so, again, when the Stoics proclaimed that something which they called Nature was the rule of life, and that a perfect conformity with its dictates would be the perfection of humanity, there was nothing to condemn their idea in that vaster and yet more definite conception which identified Nature with the will of one supreme Lawgiver whose character is perfect love, and righteousness, and truth. Much that the Greek and Latin thinkers said on this aspect of Nature was practically and profoundly true. But it was generally, if not universally, associated with such gross and materialistic ideas of that which constituted 'Nature' that, practically, its whole value was dissipated and lost.

The attitude of the great Hebrew and Christian teachers towards the ancient philosophies of Greece is one of the most striking circumstances attending the history of religion. It is an attitude of absolute reserve. Considering that for nearly 900 years, from Thales to Marcus Aurelius, many of the greatest intellects that have ever dignified the human race, were struggling to attain some definite conceptions on the constitution and course of Nature—considering that these struggles did issue in many speculative conclusions of singular grandeur and penetration, which attracted much attention in the world—considering, farther, that this term of centuries is coincident with those in which the Hebrew historians, and prophets, and singers, were handling the same problems—it is notable indeed that the sacred writers cared neither to hail approximations to their own

teaching, where these were noticeable in heathen philosophies, nor to contest or expose in them failings and divergencies, where these were glaring and fundamental. The geographical isolation of the Jews, and their still more complete intellectual solitude during a great part of the time, may account for much. The complete failure of the classical philosophies to become a power in the world even among their own native communities, accounts still farther, no doubt, for the treatment of them as a neglectable quantity. But after the age of Alexander the Great had brought the intellect of Greece into a wide contact with the world, and had given to its ideas the range and authority of a great conquering race, it is impossible to be satisfied with the same explanation. The silence with which the great writers of Christian theology treated the philosophies of Greece and Rome, cannot have been due either to the ignorance of isolation, or to any mere feelings of contempt. Our Lord himself never even mentions them. St. Paul was a native of Tarsus—a city known to have contained the most flourishing Greek University in the East—and although himself educated, certainly in part, and perhaps wholly, under the great Jewish teacher, Gamaliel, he must have known, and there are clear indications that he did know, what was then called philosophy. He knew it, too, to be—practically and in the main—an influence antagonistic to the Gospel of Christ. He warns those to whom he writes 'not to be led away by philosophy and vain deceit[1].' He

[1] Col. ii. 8.

speaks of the world 'by wisdom knowing not God[1],' and he holds up in substitution for that kind of wisdom, the knowledge of Him whom he called 'Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God[2].' Still, there is no wrangling with the schools; and it is evident from his speech at Athens that he was ready and eager to seize upon all the 'broken lights' of truth which struggled through the confusions of Gentile speculative contemplation. When he was encountered personally by the Epicureans and the Stoics—when he was contemptuously called by them a 'babbler'—and when his doctrine was denounced as 'foolishness,' he did indeed dispute daily in the synagogues and in the market-places with both Jews and Greeks[3]. But in his writings, as well as in those of the other Apostles, we find no pains whatever taken to meet philosophy on its own ground of abstract argument. It was treated, indeed, sometimes as a help by way of illustration, sometimes as an obstruction, but never as a serious rival in the fields of thought. It had afforded exercise to the strong dialectical instincts in man, and it had engaged successive generations of thinkers—as Greeks especially loved to be engaged—in opposing camps of intellectual contention. But it had few deep roots even in the intellect; and it had none whatever in the affections. It gave to men little that they could live by, and nothing for which they would care to die. Substitution, therefore, not confutation, was the plan of the Apostles. They spoke from a higher elevation

[1] 1 Cor. i. 21. [2] 1 Cor. i. 24. [3] Acts xvii. 17.

and commanding a wider view. They proclaimed new facts, and with these new facts a whole world of new philosophical ideas were inseparably connected.

There was however, probably, another reason why the Apostles of Christian theology avoided any direct polemic with Gentile philosophy. A good deal of that philosophy was employed in a direction with which they did not desire to interfere. It was directed to what is now generally understood by the word Science—that is to say, the explanation of physical phenomena in their causal relations to each other. With a prescience which was certainly wise, and which we may well be allowed to consider as Divine, they looked with a sublime reserve on the whole possible area of speculative thought in the direction of secondary causes. They themselves continually referred to such causes whenever it was instructive so to do. They seem to have had an instinctive and inspired confidence that, in this direction, nothing could be found out that was really new—nothing really strange—nothing really antagonistic—nothing that could be more than fresh illustrations of facts and laws which had been long known and had been amply provided for, by anticipation, in the fundamental explanations of a true theology. And well has their faithful confidence in this respect been justified by events. Those anticipations of modern physical discovery which had been actually reached, at least with a wonderful approximation, by some of the earlier Greek philosophers, are a signal, and indeed a splendid, witness to the natural correlations which

bind together the structure of the human mind, and the structure of the material and intellectual system in which its own energies are born, and out of which they come. If some of the old Pythagoreans who held that Number was at the root of Nature, and that the power of numerical relations was that in which her great secret lay, could now see what has been achieved by mathematics in the mechanics of the universe—still more, perhaps, if they could see the diagrammatic numerical forms in which the wonderful facts and laws of chemical combination are now habitually explained—forms the very essence of which is the expression of numerical relations—they might well be proud of the penetrating powers of their master's intellect. In like manner the philosophers who conceived the idea of the clash of atoms as the ultimate fact in the constitution of matter, might well be proud of having seen, with such a close approximation to the truth, the modern idea of the dynamic theory of gases. But Christian theology was still more wise in its silent faith that these, and all such like, discoveries in the physical constitution of the universe, would be found to be covered and overarched by the still grander conception that all these forces are but the tools and implements of the creative mind—casting only an ever clearer and clearer light on the profound question how it is that the rigid uniformities of sequence among these forces, are the necessary and natural conditions under which, alone, they can be made pliable to use, and can thus subserve their final ends.

Not indifference, but a spirit of the largest patience, may well possess the souls of those who watch the progress of physical discovery with the indelible persuasion of the Psalmist, 'For all are Thy servants[1].' In like manner when the subject of investigation did not belong to the world of matter but to the world of mind—when Aristotle analyzed the grammar of our intellectual assent, and detected the laws of reasoning in the unconscious structure of the Syllogism—a work was done which powerfully reinforced the doctrine that the mind of man is an adjusted and an adapted mechanism for catching and reflecting the light of reason and of truth. But this is one of the foundation stones of Hebrew and of Christian theology. For this is the doctrine on which alone can securely rest the idea of responsibility for opinions, and the still grander idea of a soul capable, by its very construction, of standing in close relations with the Creative Spirit. And no philosopher has ever given a more significant illustration of the consequences flowing from this adaptation of mental structure to the ultimate realities of the universe, than Aristotle himself. Modern science often speaks with a sort of indulgent compassion of the position occupied by naturalists in those past ages which were destitute of the many mechanical appliances whereby the naked senses have been enlarged in range, such as the microscope and the telescope. But they forget that another apparatus of infinitely more subtle power was in the born possession of such a mind as that of

[1] Ps. cxix. 91.

Aristotle—perhaps more fully than it is in the possession of any of our own contemporaries. Aristotle's detection of natural laws governing the logical process in the human intellect, is a discovery which, in principle, extends far beyond the syllogism. The sense and the perception of those dim analogies—the instant recognition of those identities of work—which connect our own mental operations with the processes which prevail in Nature—this is a sense and a perception founded, like the other, on the natural working or function of a structural apparatus, and the sensitiveness of that apparatus varies with what we call the inspiration, or the genius, of the man.

Christian theology had indeed no need to be jealous of philosophy in the hands of Aristotle. His treatment of biological problems was not too primitive or too old-fashioned to secure, even in our own day, the enthusiastic admiration of Cuvier—whose idea of an 'explanation' as applied to organic structures, was, as we have seen, precisely that which was the principle of explanation that commended itself to the father of Science who flourished more than 2,000 years ago. In the view of Aristotle the essence of every organic structure was in its function—that is to say, in its purpose in the economy of the creature's life. And this purpose was its final, as distinguished from its proximate, cause. The essence of an eye lay in the function of seeing, or in other words, in the faculty of sight. Since his time it is indeed true that the microscope has revealed in that organ a complexity of structure for the attainment of this end, which,

more than in any other organic structure, brings its mechanism within the category of measurable units in space and time. And the cause of this complexity of structure is the necessity, for the purposes of vision, of such a mechanical adaptation of living tissues as will fit into the composition, and into the velocities, of light. That composition, and those velocities, are so nearly inconceivable to us in the numbers they involve, that they range from four hundred, to eight or nine hundred millions of millions of vibrations in a second of time. These are the numbers which have to be discriminated by an organ, if it be made to distinguish the colours which range from violet to red. The almost infinite fineness of mechanical adjustments which is involved in a structure with such functions, was of course unknown to Aristotle, as it is still but very incompletely known to us. But if he had known all that we now know, and a great deal more, he would have been as far off as ever from any physical explanation of the phenomena of sensation, of organic growth, and of the vital forces under which such tissues are built up in the egg or in the womb. The philosophical generalization of Aristotle would have remained, as it still remains, the only satisfying conception. But this is none other than the old and familiar conception of Hebrew and of Christian theology. It is expressed with all the power and beauty of the sacred writers in the Old Testament in the text from the Hebrew writer of Ecclesiastes which was chosen by Locke as the motto of his famous Treatise on the Human

Understanding, 'As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all[1].'

In full possession of this philosophy which has thus satisfied the most powerful intellects both of the ancient and of the modern world, the Christian Apostles had no cause to dread the progress of discovery, or even of speculation, on the constitution of the Universe. They were confident that it could only fill in, and fill up, here and there, some bits of the all-embracing outline of their own vast conception. In their survey of Nature they saw, as it were, the forests and the mountains, and they were not anxious about the work of those who explored the botany and the rocks. But, besides the spirit of prescient direction under which the Apostles evidently wrote, there was another reason why they should maintain a lofty reserve on the thinkings of philosophy. The school most prevalent in their time—that of the Stoics—had gathered up into itself a strange eclectic combination of ideas from many different quarters, and not a few of these ideas seemed almost as much anticipations of Christian thought, as some physical conceptions struck out by the older thinkers, were curious approximations to the discovered facts of modern physical investigation. We must remember that the writings of Lucretius, of Cicero, of Epictetus, and of Seneca, must have been all familiar in the apostolic age. The two last were strictly contemporaries of St. Paul. Even the

[1] Eccles. xi. 5.

great Epicurean poet had, as we have seen, some splendid intuitions, but the Stoics had many more. In their writings and sayings we may see the high-water level which the ancient philosophies ever reached in what may be called the purely intellectual perception of spiritual truths. It is well known that the discourses of Seneca are full of such strange approximations to the ideas and even to the expressions of St. Paul, that it has been supposed that they were personal friends, and that the Roman Stoic took his philosophical inspiration from the great Apostle of the Gentiles. This is a subject of the highest interest in more than one point of view; and perhaps no contribution to the history of Christian theology has appeared in our times, more full of instruction than the essay in which Bishop Lightfoot has subjected the facts of this case to a close and profound analysis[1]. The result of that analysis is most striking and suggestive. Bishop Lightfoot marshals all the instances of parallelism or coincidence between the thoughts or language of Seneca and those of the Apostle, and, after eliminating much that may be accidental, and much that is superficial and deceptive, there still remain such a number and variety of cases that they demand some general explanation. There would seem to be in the writings of this Roman philosopher some strange echoes even of the Sermon on the Mount; and this is quite possible, for we must remember that, although it is certain that the Gospels cannot have been published or known before

[1] *The Epistles of St. Paul.* Philippians, Disputation II.

the death of Seneca, which happened in A.D. 65, it is not less certain that the sayings of our Lord must have been widely circulated long before they were gathered up and recorded either by St. John, or by the Synoptists. In all cases of similarity, and apparent derivation, between writings of the same age, it is often erroneously assumed that there are only two possible explanations—either that one author unconsciously appropriated from the other, or that each similarly appropriated from some third writer who was accessible to both. But there is another explanation which is too often forgotten—which is this—that the third and common source was—not any man or any writer—but simply certain facts and truths of Nature which were detectable as such by the common intellectual and moral faculties of mankind. Plagiarism or derivation of any kind can never be, even presumably, the explanation of such coincidences or parallelisms where the subject matter to which they refer, consists in facts recognizable or detectable by the inherent powers of the human mind, when these powers are exercised under training which is exceptionally high. In the purely physical sciences this cause of community of results would be at once recognized as needing no further explanation. Nobody, for example, would think it strange that chemists, working far away from each other, should report the same facts in the same language, as the result of their analysis of any bit of matter. And even in those branches of knowledge which are not purely physical, as for example

in the laws of Political Economy, the most perfect parallelism between the conceptions and the language of any two writers, could never be safely taken as an indication of plagiarism on the part of either, but only as an important corroboration of truths independently perceived, and independently described, by both. And this is undoubtedly the light in which we must regard most of the coincidences of thought and language which are conspicuous between the writings of Seneca and of St. Paul. Such harmonies are not confined to these two authors. They are to be traced more or less markedly between many of the older utterances of Greek philosophy and those of Hebrew or of Christian theology,—both of them dating from times when communication was impossible.

It would have been strange indeed if, during so many centuries, the most subtle intellects that have ever been developed in the human race, had been poring over what they could see, or conceive, of the relations between themselves and the universe, without their seeing and identifying at least some of the main facts of these relations. What they saw, and what they did not see—the clearness or the obscurity of the vision—are all phenomena of the highest interest and importance. The school of the later Roman Stoics had every possible advantage. They had behind them all that had been done by the older schools, and they are supposed to have inherited from their founders elements of thought and feeling which were not Greek but Semitic—that is to say, they had some obscure connexion with the race in

one branch of which the religious knowledge of the Hebrews had been developed. They were free to pick and choose among all the past—to reject what did not commend itself to their judgment as true, and to adopt whatever might be suggested to that earnestness of ethical sentiment which was one of the newest and most striking elements in the character of the school. All this they did. They were essentially eclectic, nor were they by any means unsuccessful in the conceptions which they assimilated from a great variety of sources, and from that most fertile of all sources—their own moral and intellectual nature in its thoughtful observation and experience of the mysteries of life. They did not care for physics. They did not care for formal logic. Their philosophy was essentially a philosophy of intuitions, and in this field they did some noble work. On many of the subjects of contemplative speculation which every philosophy must encounter, if it even attempts to deal with the constitution of the universe, the Stoics did undoubtedly hold language which has at least a strange echo of the language of Christian teaching.

Of these subjects Bishop Lightfoot specifies no less than some seven or eight, each one of which goes deep down into what may be called the philosophy of Christian doctrine, and of all religion. On the goodness of some Thing, or of some Existence which at least they called God: on the filial relation of man to that Existence, on the fatherly chastisement of man by God, or in other words, on the

spiritual uses of affliction: on the indwelling of a Divine spirit in man: on the universal dominion of sin: on the office of the conscience: on self-examination and confession: on social duties towards other men: on all of these—the Stoics held lofty sentiments, conveyed in phrases which are curiously near to, and sometimes are identical with, the phraseology of the Gospel. Some detailed coincidences with the thought and imagery of the Sermon on the Mount—all taken from the writings of Seneca—are striking from the same point of view, whilst some extend to other recorded sayings of our Lord. With the Epistles of St. Paul many more coincidences are to be found. But the question whether it is possible or impossible that any of these may have been derived from personal knowledge of the Apostle, or personal acquaintance with his language in speech or writing, is a question which has no other interest than that of a purely literary or historical curiosity. Seneca was undoubtedly the minister of Nero during the two years of St. Paul's first captivity in Rome, when the Apostle dwelt, as St. Luke tells us, in his own hired house, and preached continually, 'no man forbidding him[1].' Yet Bishop Lightfoot has shown that the probability of personal intercourse is not very great; and it is of more interest to observe that the coincidences are not confined to Seneca, but extend to the whole of the Stoic school, and to many of the conceptions which had long constituted its peculiarities in the history of philosophy. The

[1] Acts xxviii. 30, 31.

harmonies of Christianity with much that had been taught by Cicero, are perhaps even more substantial and remarkable, and Cicero had been dead for a little more than a hundred years before the residence of St. Paul in Rome. It seems to be generally agreed that what is called an 'Oriental element' is distinctly recognizable in the Stoic school, and it is legitimate to surmise that this may have come from the great fountain of religious thought which had been open for centuries in the Judaean hills.

How far a knowledge of the unique worship and literature of the Jews had spread at all among the surrounding nations, is one of the darkest problems of history. A fact which is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles would seem to be significant—that an officer in the household of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, had come up to worship in the Jewish Temple, and that as he was returning from Jerusalem to Gaza he was found by St. Peter to be busy reading the Book of the prophet Isaiah[1]. It is not easy to conjecture how far such conditions of foreign intercourse may have extended, and it is difficult to conceive how they could have existed at all in such a case as this—mentioned incidentally and without surprise—if they had not been common, or at least by no means unusual. If any of the Hebrew prophets were known in the royal household of Ethiopia, some at least of the Psalms may well have been known also, and if so, then in them there was opened a perfect well-spring of the most highly

[1] Acts viii. 27.

spiritual conceptions on the philosophy of religion. Moreover, if no more than even the merest fragments of the Hebrew Scriptures had penetrated so far as the upper regions of the Nile, it is difficult to conceive that they had never reached those far nearer colonies of Greece which were scattered over the shores of Asia, and were fertile in speculative thought. It is not difficult therefore to imagine whence came those so-called Oriental elements in the philosophy of the Stoics which have been generally recognized. The difficulty lies rather in the other direction—in understanding how comparatively weak those elements were,—how broken and disconnected, —how powerless to attract or influence the heart and the lives of men.

It is here that we come upon three great facts which make us independent of all theories and all conjectures. The first of these facts is this—that the coincidences between Greek philosophy and some at least of the doctrines of Christianity, are an indisputable proof that those doctrines do concern the same problems which philosophy had of necessity to encounter and to deal with, if it was to give any account of the constitution of the Universe. It must therefore be relevant to compare them. The second fact is—that in the solution of those problems Greek philosophy was a rival of Christianity when it appeared in the world, and, to a very large extent, an enemy. Its hostility was doubtless largely due to ignorance, and to the credence given by almost all educated Greeks and Romans to the vulgarest

falsehoods concerning the practices and beliefs of the infant Church. But, from whatever cause, philosophy was, on the whole, a rival and an enemy to the Christian solution of the great problems of humanity. The third indisputable fact is—that in this great contest philosophy failed, and Christian theology succeeded—in winning the assent both of the human intellect, and of the human heart.

The success, too, of Christianity was of a peculiar kind. It was won as it were without the sound of battle. It was not the violent or sudden rush of an opposing army, but a steady overflow, and a final substitution. It had all the characters which mark the operation of natural causes—that is to say, of causes which, being natural, are irresistible and Divine. Philosophy never had been securely seated in any general possession of the ground. Bishop Lightfoot compares its writers to a corps of professors without any classes. It may also be compared to an army all composed of officers, with no rank and file. It never did enlist the people. It took no hold of the general mind, and, at the time when Christ came, it had lost the little vitality it ever possessed, even among a select few. The Roman Stoics were indeed in some aspects noble and pathetic—but they were languid, impassive, unpractical, and after all, hesitating and doubtful. The Christian Apostles do not seem to have disputed with them at all, but to have passed them by with a glance of compassionate indulgence, and simply to have proclaimed another philosophy instead. And this

new philosophy at once began to take hold, and to be accepted—in a manner and in a sense in which no Greek philosophy had ever been accepted. From the first moment, it was what may be called dynamic. It was not received, where it took root at all, with a languid or hesitating acquiescence, but with a passionate fervour of conviction which instantly became a power in the world. It is specially recorded of it, and we know it to have been the fact, that on its first promulgation the common people heard it gladly. But from the moment of its proclamation in the Gentile world it spread among all classes of society. It captured minds of every calibre. There was no intellect then existing upon earth before which any teaching could fear to plead, that had already conquered the intellect of St. Paul. In the course of a few years it had spread through all the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, and had established itself not only in the Capital, but in the Imperial Halls upon the Palatine. Only some twenty-seven years after the Crucifixion St. Paul could write to the converts in Rome that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world [1]. Nothing seemed to stop it. Even the measures taken to arrest its progress only contributed the more to bring out its invincible attractions. St. Paul tells us that his journey as a prisoner to Rome, and his residence there in bonds, had tended powerfully to the furtherance of the Gospel which he preached, and when in writing from Rome to other cities of the Empire he

[1] Rom. i. 8.

sent messages of salutation from the converts he had made there, he was able to specify 'chiefly they of Caesar's household [1].'

And all this march from victory to victory continued to be made in spite of bloody and repeated persecutions, until, at last, the new philosophy came to be seated securely not only in the Imperial household, but on the Imperial throne. Then, as we all know, the old philosophies roused themselves to make a last stand for life. Protected by a pagan and an apostate Emperor, and fortified by an alliance between some elements borrowed from Hebrew thought, and by other elements taken from the noblest of the older Greek schools, the Platonists, they tried hard to galvanize into activity, again, the old ideas and practices of heathen worship. But all in vain. The new solution which had been presented of the enigmas of life—the new explanation given of the constitution of the Universe—had so completely commended themselves to the intellects and to the hearts of men, that the old conceptions of the Greek philosophies, one and all, were either rejected as false and irrational, or where partly true, and high, and good, were completely superseded as mere bits and fragments of the larger truths which Christianity had made the common inheritance of mankind.

All these are incontestable facts in the history of human thought which stand absolutely alone. And if philosophy is of any use at all, it must have some account to give us of the causes of this great crisis,

[1] Phil. iv. 22.

and of this great change, in its own life. It bears upon the face of it all the marks of an effect produced by great natural laws, that is to say, by causes deeply seated in the conceiving mind of man, and in its relations with all the conceivable realities of its own nature, and of the world around it. There must have been something to account for it, on the one hand, in the systems of thought which so withered and died, and, on the other hand, in the new system of thought which so rapidly overwhelmed and superseded them. And this something must be discoverable. Accordingly a recent historian of philosophy, who certainly does not approach his subject from a Christian point of view—the late Mr. G. H. Lewes—has summed up the facts in language which identifies the cause of failure in Greek thought with the futility of its attempts to be a philosophy at all. The Sophists and the Sceptics had proved this. Its own dialectics had undermined it, and landed it in universal doubt: 'All the wisdom of the antique world was powerless against the Sceptics. Speculative belief was powerless against the Sceptics. Speculative belief was reduced to the most uncertain probability. Faith in philosophic truth was extinct. Faith in human endeavour, that way, was gone. Philosophy was rejected as impossible. . . . The last cry of despair seemed to have been wrung from the baffled thinkers, as they declared their predecessors to have been hopelessly wrong, and declared also that their error was without a remedy. It was indeed a saddening contemplation. The hopes and aspira-

tions of so many incomparable minds thus irrevocably doomed, the struggles of so many men, from Thales to the elaborate systematization of the forms of thought which occupied an Aristotle—the struggles of all these men had ended in scepticism. Little was to be gleaned from the harvest of their endeavours but arguments against the possibility of that Philosophy they were so anxious to form. Centuries of thought had not advanced the mind one step nearer to a solution of the problems with which, child-like, it began. It began with a child-like question. It ended with an aged doubt. Not only did it doubt the solutions of the great problem which others had attempted; it even doubted the possibility of any solution. It was not the doubt which begins, but the doubt which ends inquiry[1].'

This is indeed a striking picture of the facts, and it is a picture drawn to the very life. But it does not account for them. It enters into no analysis of the causes of a failure so disastrous and so complete. And yet it does indicate, very clearly, where those causes must be sought. It was in the building up of any real philosophy that the Greek schools of thought had broken down. It is not philosophy at all—merely to gather, here and there and everywhere, some scattered thoughts which have in them some elements of truth. If this can be called knowledge in any sense, it is knowledge in the most rudimentary condition. It is the knowledge of the savage, or of the child, who knows a few isolated

[1] Lewes' *History of Philosophy*, vol. i. pp. 373, 374.

facts, or has a few intuitive perceptions, but is wholly unable to think of them in their true connexion. It is the business of philosophy to select, purify, and co-ordinate these isolated truths with each other, and with new truths yet more general and comprehensive, with which they are co-existent, and to which they point and lead the way. Any system of speculative thought which fails to do this, fails to be a philosophy at all. Still more must the failure be complete, and the breakdown inevitable, when such speculative systems attempt to combine together a few conceptions which are in a measure true, with other conceptions which are immeasurably false.

Now this, and nothing less than this, was the ineradicable fault of all the so-called philosophical schools of Greece. In particular, this is the case with that philosophy of the Stoics which may dazzle us sometimes with its superficial glitter of ideas and of words more or less akin to that real and true philosophy before which Stoicism faded like a dream. In order to see how vague, incoherent, and, so to speak, inorganic is the whole structure of Stoic thought, we have only to examine carefully the writings of those great Stoics who belonged to practically the same age—of Cicero, for example, on the 'Nature of the Gods,' of Epictetus in his Discourses, of Seneca in his Essays, and at a later time of Marcus Aurelius in his Thoughts. Stoicism was nothing if it was not a system of Ethics. Yet it had no doctrine on the nature and sources of obligation, or even on any intelligible standard of morality in conduct. It simply

took refuge in such ambiguities of language as 'life according to Nature,' and in other like forms of speech which ring the changes on the same indefinite conception. In this language it failed to take any account of those most obvious facts of human life which indicate a wide departure in the case of men from those conformities with the present, and adaptations for the future, which do really give some definite meaning to the idea of Nature as the rule of life among the lower animals. It is a satire indeed on 'life according to Nature' that Seneca himself, to serve his brutal master Nero, wrote a treatise in defence of matricide. And thus again, as it tried to erect a system of Ethics without the cement of obligation, so also did it play with the language of Theology whilst not upholding the existence of a God. But as if these vacuities in its system were not enough, it was full of one great intellectual vice—that, namely, of a gross materialism. The supreme God of the Stoic had no existence distinct from external Nature. He was identified with fate, with necessity, with Nature as a living whole. A corporeal existence was assigned even to moral abstractions, such as courage, cheerfulness, and wisdom. And when in that philosophy spiritual conceptions are dimly seen, and when they borrow some forms of expression from sources which we can only guess, they are divorced from the only signification which makes them valuable. Seneca speaks of a Sacred Spirit, and of our being Members of God. But all this is nothing but changes rung on the one fundamental

conception of our place in external Nature, and of the Universe as one great animal pervaded by one soul or principle of life. Into man, as fractions of this whole, or as limbs of this body, is transposed a portion of the Universal spirit. All of this was not only useless as the foundations of religion, but it was bad philosophy. It was irrational and incoherent thought. Beautiful in form, touching in sentiment, as many of the fragments were, they were incapable of being compacted together into any connected or solid intellectual structure. No more in ethical than in religious conceptions, was it competent to lay down upon them any safe or strong foundations. 'It ends,' says Mr. Lewes, 'in apathy and egoism. Apathy, indeed, was considered by the Stoics as the highest condition of Humanity, whereas in truth it is the lowest [1].'

There is no need to wonder why Christianity rapidly superseded such pretended philosophies as these. It did exactly what they had attempted, and had failed, to do. It really was a philosophy, and they were none. It gave an account of the constitution of the Universe and of man's relation to it, which, without professing to be exhaustive, or to satisfy curiosity, was, so far as it was intended to go, sufficient, coherent, and intelligible. Its religious teaching was a real system of thought addressing itself vigorously, definitely, and coherently, to all the fundamental problems which had baffled speculation. Conscious of its own indwelling strength and power, even in this which is the

[1] *History of Philosophy*, vol. i. p. 360.

lowest aspect of its character, it could thus well afford to maintain towards the old schools of paganism its own lofty attitude of compassionate reserve. Only a few words of not disrespectful reference—only a few notes of warning—escape its lips: 'The world by wisdom knew not God[1].' Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship as an unknown God, 'Him declare we unto you[2].' Christianity did not stop for a moment to wrangle or dispute, nor did it say one word to disparage or discourage the application of reason to the systematic search for any kind of truth. It glanced indeed at the 'oppositions of science,' 'but,' it instantly added, 'falsely so called[3].' Committing itself to no propositions that could be disproved in the progress of physical discovery, it poured forth utterance after utterance on the facts and laws which are the basis of all spiritual conceptions—the underlying realities of Nature. For these utterances it challenged —and awaited—the ceaseless corroborations of accurate observation and experience both in the external and internal world. And among these corroborations it reckoned and claimed every idea of natural goodness which had adorned literature or life among the heathen nations, and every grain of truth that had rewarded the excursions of their speculative thought. It not only adopted, but positively relied on, everything amongst them which was 'excellent and of good report.' It was confident that in its own march through time, all these elements would fall into line behind it, and would be found to be nothing but

[1] 1 Cor. i. 21. [2] Acts xvii. 23. [3] 1 Tim. vi. 20.

subordinate and fractional parts of its own Divine philosophy.

This is the secret of one feature in the sacred writings, both of the Old and the New Testament, which distinguishes them from all other writings. That feature is their majesty—their imperial tone. It disappears absolutely with the Apostles. None of the so-called Apostolic Fathers possess it even in the least degree. Good and edifying in various degrees they may be, but they are often childish and fanciful. Not even when we come to the great names of Origen and Augustine does this majesty reappear. It has a purely Divine source. It was at once noticed in the discourses of Christ by the contemporaries who heard Him, that 'He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.' There is in His words, and in the farther development of them by His Apostles and evangelists, no sound of disputation—no breath of mere polemics. The solitary grandeur of the general effect is unmistakable, and although familiarity and carelessness are apt to obscure that effect with us, we may be sure that it was—or rather that it indicated—the most deep-seated cause of the resistless progress of Christianity in the world, as well of its tenacious vitality in our own day.

When we try to analyze wherein that atmosphere of authority and of majesty consists, we shall find that it is largely traceable to its handling of the conception of Law as—when properly understood—the highest expression of the Supreme Agency in Nature. What that agency is, and what are our

own relations to it, are the ultimate questions of all speculative inquiry, and it is on those questions that Christianity has established a system of thought which, whilst it reaches into the highest regions of human aspiration, has always its feet firmly planted on the common and solid ground of ascertainable fact and of corresponding law. It is this feature in its teaching to which the present volume has been devoted. But many volumes would not exhaust the subject, and no man who has entered at all upon this analysis can fail to have seen innumerable avenues of suggestion opening out on every side of him, but into which he has had no time to enter. Before closing these pages, however, it may be well to illustrate the general conception they are intended to establish, by fixing our attention on certain historical facts connected with the memorable epoch which we have been last considering.

It is not easy to sound the depths of uneasiness—of dissatisfaction—and even of distress, upon religious questions, which affected the minds of all thinking men at the time of our Lord's birth, and for many years after His crucifixion. Notwithstanding the complete failure of the Greek schools to satisfy the demands of either philosophy or religion, men would continue to argue and to speculate as before, and the revival of Stoicism in Rome, as well as the appearance of the great poem of Lucretius, representing the Epicurean school, were striking proofs of an undying interest in the questions they discussed. It has been said that the destruction of the public liberties of the

Roman people, and their subjection under a military despotism, turned, and almost compelled, educated men into the paths of speculation. But this is a very inadequate explanation of the facts. Lucretius does not seem to have belonged to the class of politicians, and Cicero, who did belong to them, was immersed in political action to nearly the end of his days. Seneca was not only a politician, but his career was most successful for a like proportion of his life, having been first the tutor, and then the all-powerful minister, of Nero for many years. Epictetus was a slave, and lost nothing by political changes. It cannot have been an enforced banishment from public life that drove any of these men into the lines of thought in which they worked so laboriously. It can have been nothing but the universal and pressing interest of the subject on which they wrote. There must have been, moreover, a large reading public to whom their writings or their discourses were addressed. And yet it is certain that all this widespread interest in, and desire for, spiritual knowledge, found nothing to reward, far less to satisfy it, in the greatest writers of the past, or of that time. It was impossible to be carried away by the enthusiasm of Lucretius in favour of the doctrine that the law of Death was the only law affecting the human soul that was indeed immortal and eternal. It was equally impossible to resist the rational and deserved attacks made both by Lucretius the Epicurean, and by Cicero the Stoic, on the whole system of popular worship, and on the popular conceptions as to the nature of the

gods. Yet, again, it was impossible to be satisfied with the fact that neither of these writers—representing as they did the only two philosophies which were really alive at that time—offered any substitute whatever as objects of belief, or of adoration, or still less, as objects of love. To all earnest minds with strong religious instincts, the situation must have been intolerable. It must have been literally the position of men 'having no hope, and without God in the world.' Personal immortality was denounced by one school as the most pestilent of all ideas, whilst by the other school it was passed by as of little or no account. Morality was founded on no theory or principle of obligation; and piety was recommended without any definite conception of the existence or of the character of the gods. There was absolutely nothing to satisfy the intellect, and less than nothing to engage the heart.

Let us now try to imagine the effect, in this condition of things, of the arrival in Rome of such a document as the Letter of St. Paul, which was sent to the Christian converts there some time during the first five years of the reign of Nero[1]. Doubtless it was copied and widely circulated among those whose intellects had been puzzled by the gross materialism of Lucretius, or by the occasionally noble, but inconsequent, reasonings of Cicero and Seneca. In order to realize the effect of such a new teaching, let any man sit down to that Epistle and read it through

[1] Bishop Lightfoot gives the date as A. D. 58. Nero had ascended the Imperial throne in A. D. 54 (*Biblical Essays*, p. 222).

—carefully and consecutively—bearing in his memory what the mental condition of all thinkers must have been at that time. He will then perhaps see and feel that, both morally and intellectually, it must have been to them nothing less than a new emotion. The majesty of tone is unmistakable. It is the tone of a writer handling certainties and not opinions. It dealt with facts, not with speculations. Without a whisper of mere debate, it is nevertheless full of argument. There is no trace of any plan of formal propositions, and yet it is thoroughly systematic. It begins with theology, and it ends with ethics. That is to say, it sets forth, first and foremost, the character and attributes of the Being to whom perfect obedience would be, of necessity, a perfect righteousness. It then goes on to indicate the dispositions, the motives, and the conduct, in which such righteousness must consist. Its theology begins and ends with Christ as a Personal Incarnation of the Godhead. It refers to that incarnation as promised by the prophets. In the very first sentence it assumes and announces this truth as resting on both internal and external evidence—on the spirit of holiness in His life and teaching, and on the fact of His resurrection from the dead. In both of these ways—on both of these kinds of evidence—He had been declared 'to be the Son of God with power[1].' The Letter appeals freely to the light of Nature, but it treats that light as a part of the light of God. It ascribes to a wilful departure from that natural light, the hideous vices which

[1] Rom. i. 1-3.

prevailed in the heathen world, and which had reduced man to a level far lower than that of any of the beasts[1]. It unfolds the dealings of God with men in the history of the Jews, and it explains the connexion between this preparatory selection of one people, and the light which was to shine upon all nations. Instead of singing the praises of death—of 'immortal death' as the best gift that man could hope for—it held up the example and the teaching of One who was both Human and Divine, and who proclaimed as His mission, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly[2].' Then this new philosophy, whilst dwelling much on the corruption of man as an actual and a patent fact, dwelt not less emphatically on his Divine origin—on the immense capacities of his nature—and on the consequent possibility of an immeasurable elevation. In speaking of a Man as 'the Son of God with power,' it specially meant, and dwelt upon, His power to make His human brethren partakers in that dignity as 'heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ[3].' It spoke of the possibility of the nearest conceivable relations with the Deity becoming the direct subject of human consciousness—the Divine Spirit 'bearing witness with our spirit' to their reality and truth[4]. Nor could an educated Roman of that time fail to be struck with the fact that the great attribute of benevolence which—as his illustrious countryman Cicero had lately argued—must be conceived to be an attribute of the

[1] Rom. i. 20-23.
[2] John x. 10.
[3] Rom. viii. 14-17.
[4] Rom. viii. 16.

Godhead[1], was emphatically proclaimed to be so, as a fact, in this Letter of St. Paul. It is in this declaration that every reader of it must have seen and felt the highest aims of the old philosophy rising at last into actual attainment in the knowledge of a new religion. A conception and belief which was obviously one of supreme importance in philosophy, was no longer pleaded for as a conception resting only on the cold inferences of abstract argument, but a conception announced as the result of absolute knowledge, and embraced by all the deepest convictions of the soul. To the writer of this Letter it was a matter of personal knowledge and experience—something of which he was as sure as of his own existence.

Many passages in the Letter which specially related to Jewish history and belief, may indeed have been with difficulty followed by a Roman, and some of them may still be obscure to us. But the general drift and result of Paul's argument was as clear as day. It was that all the declarations and promises of favour which had ever been addressed to Jews, had now become the common inheritance of all nations on certain natural and reasonable conditions of obedience and of faith. Such words as 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love[2],' and a thousand other utterances of the same kind addressed to Israel by the prophets, were now proclaimed as words applicable to the whole human race. Those pretensions to exclusive Divine favour which must have seemed so offensive and irrational to nations far greater in power

[1] *De Naturâ Deorum*, xliii. [2] Jer. xxxi. 3.

and in culture than the Jews, were, in this Letter, seen to be absolutely abandoned. The love proclaimed as the highest attribute of the Father was proclaimed to be a universal love; and although this was, for a time, so inconceivable to Jews that it was but slowly accepted by the Apostles themselves—was actually the cause of serious divisions among them—and was reckoned even by Paul himself as a part of 'the great mystery of godliness[1]'—it must have been an immense attraction to every man who was imbued with the true spirit of philosophy. All the schools could appreciate the authoritative declaration that 'there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him[2].' The intense conviction on the reality of this Divine love which animated the writer of the Letter to Rome, could not fail to be not only striking but contagious. In a world so unhappy as the Roman world then was—so distracted by hopeless doubts, and so dominated by the spectacle of supreme power in the hands of men supremely wicked, cruel, and licentious—it must have been an unspeakable comfort and revelation to read the triumphant certainties of Paul:—'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord[3].' 'I am persuaded'—this is what the world

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 16. [2] Rom. x. 12. [3] Rom. viii. 35-39.

had so long wanted, and had failed in getting—some thing to be sure of—something to rest upon with the full assurance of an absolute conviction. Philosophy had not attained it. Not in 'that way,' as Mr. Lewes says, could it possibly be attained. But now the Jews and Romans who read the Letter of St. Paul, read the words of a man who was in full possession of it, and could expound with extraordinary power the facts and laws on which his certainties were founded. This was, literally, the 'Desire of all Nations,' and the Letter declared how that Desire had, indeed, come.

Then, following strictly as a complement to this theology, came, in the same Letter, the splendid pages on the ethics of the new religion which, in our divisions of it, begin with the twelfth chapter. As if to mark their rational and necessary connexion with those facts concerning the Divine Nature which had been before set forth, these pages began with the word 'therefore'—indicative of logical results—and proceed to give a summary of those principles of conduct which flow from one self-evident moral law: 'I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service[1].' Upon this firm foundation of a principle commending itself at once to the conscience and to the intellect, the Letter proceeded to enumerate a series of precepts in respect to that 'reasonable service'—precepts so pure, so penetrating, so spiritual, and

[1] Rom. xii. 1.

yet so practical as a guide in all the difficulties and trials of life, that no Roman of that time could read them without being filled with a sense, at once, of their completeness, and of their beneficence. If, only, the society in which he lived could be brought under their power, he must have felt that the world would be changed indeed. They all rested on a spiritual law which was laid down as a universal truth, that 'to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace[1].' Here, beyond all question, was a new system of thought, having all the power of an organic structure, giving a rational explanation of the facts of Nature, and laying a solid foundation for hopeful exertion in the service of an eternal kingdom of righteousness and truth. It accounted for all that was best in previous speculative thought. It put, as it were, a keystone into all the broken arches of philosophy. It revealed them as exactly what they were—genuine, but fragmentary, products of true knowledge, only needing some higher knowledge to complete them.

The rapid spread of Christianity was not only natural but inevitable under such conditions. And then came, following his Letter, the first personal visit of St. Paul to Rome, about two years later, in the year A. D. 60. He came indeed as a prisoner in the capacity of an appellant to the courts of Caesar. But neither the popular religion, nor the popular philosophy, had then taken any serious alarm on the subject of the new sect, and Paul was allowed

[1] Rom. viii. 6.

to lodge in his own hired house, and to teach and to preach during 'two whole years, no man forbidding him.' We have many specimens of Paul's epistolary style, and we have a few of his speeches. But except some passing anecdotes in the Acts, we have no report of his argumentative and persuasive conversations. It is impossible to doubt, however, that in them many Romans must have heard, for the first time, many of those sayings of Christ himself which came to be recorded afterwards in the Gospels, especially by St. John. It has often been observed, and it is indeed a conspicuous fact, that in his writings St. Paul does not dwell on any of the incidents of his Master's earthly life and ministry. The omission is undoubtedly due to the fact that he was not himself an eye-witness of those incidents, and that he knew how others, better qualified, were busy in recording all that was essential. But in his conversations during his missionary journeys, it is not probable that he can have abstained from telling those who came to hear him, many of the details which he had himself just come from hearing, at Jerusalem, from the mouth of St. John, St. Peter, and from 'James, the Lord's brother.' One saying of our Lord—how 'it is more blessed to give than to receive[1]'—not recorded elsewhere, has actually been preserved by St. Paul, who had probably heard it in this way. But many other such anecdotes must have added a powerful element to the vivid impression of historical reality, and of personal conviction, which we all derive from the writings of this great

[1] Acts xx 35.

Apostle, and which must have been still more impressive to those who listened to his spoken addresses. We may be sure how he dwelt on the certainty of Christ's resurrection, because in his writings he specially recounts the number of his Master's appearances, and the number of persons who were witnesses of them—in which number he includes himself, as 'one born out of due time[1].' The vision, and the Voice on the way to Damascus, had been the overpowering evidence which had changed his own life. Here was a man of high education—of brilliant powers—of a masculine understanding—and to whom the new religion and the new philosophy had at first appeared so false and so incredible, that he had ranged himself amongst the keenest of its persecutors,—here he was, subdued by its power, animated by the most intense and self-sacrificing love towards its Founder, and declaring to all men, 'I know in whom I have believed[2].' All these circumstances must have confirmed the feeling and the conviction which his Letter had produced, that the Christian faith was a revelation of facts, and of related truths, by which men could live, and for which they might well be willing to die. The majesty of its utterances was due to the grandeur, beauty, and self-evidence, both of its intellectual, and of its ethical, conceptions. Let us look for a moment, in conclusion, at some of these, considered mainly in the light of solutions offered for the great problems of life and thought which were the standing problems of philosophy.

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 5 8. [2] 2 Tim. i. 12.

On the nature of the Godhead the authoritative announcement of Christian philosophy is as simple as the subject admits of, and the consequential law attached to it has all the character of a self-evident and a necessary truth. 'God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth[1].' The implications involved in this doctrine are inexhaustible in extent. It implies a Personal God, with personal relations to man: not an idol of abstracting thought such as the 'Absolute,' or the 'Infinite,' or the 'Unconditioned,' but, on the contrary, a Being with a character and attributes intelligible to us. On the nature of those attributes it proclaims, especially, the primary characteristics of Righteousness and Love. God is Love—this is the emphatic summary of St. John. On the relation between the world of phenomena and the causal realities which, instinctively, we feel must lie behind them, the authoritative announcement is—as a universal truth—that 'the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal[2].' All our experience and observation of Nature are a continual corroboration of this law. Nothing that is visible is permanent; and therefore the spiritual 'seeing of Him who is invisible[3]' must be the only hope of seeing that which can endure. On the relation between man and God, the authoritative announcements in Christian theology are innumerable, all concurring in a connexion of derivation or Sonship, on the one hand, and of Fatherhood, on the other. On

[1] John iv. 24. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 18. [3] Heb. xi. 27.

the corruption and miseries of man, the assertion of fact is, that it arose from, and consists in, the rebellion of a will which was free, and on the freedom of which the possibility of virtue depends, as well as the possibility of sin. On the available means of recovery, it relies on a reunion of the human and Divine in One, who, in a special sense, united the two natures, and the belief in, and acceptance of whom, would satisfy conditions which, however partially explained, are at least always represented as conditions depending on spiritual laws of insuperable authority. On the desperate and inborn antagonism which has come to be established between the revolted children of men and the Supreme Will, it declares as a fact and as in the nature of a law, that 'the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be[1].' On the difficulty, in speculative thought, how a being in such a corrupted condition, can even begin to return to the paths leading to the highest ends of its own existence, we have the countervailing declarations, repeated in many forms, that man was made in the Creator's image, and after His likeness—that the Divine Spirit has never ceased to strive with men—that He has never left Himself without a witness in natural perceptions of moral obligation, and in some spiritual intuitions, which are at least enough to start from, in higher and higher recognitions of the truth. It asserts, moreover, as a fact and as a law, that such higher recognitions come naturally when men walk steadily, and consciously, in

[1] Rom. viii. 7.

such light as they possess. This law of increasing corroboration, and of wider enlightenment, coming from a spirit of obedience, and from a walk in the path of known duty, is expressly laid down as a law in the New Testament, as it had been heralded with characteristic power and beauty in the Psalms: 'To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the kingdom of God[1];' and again, 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart[2].'

Throughout both the Old and the New Testament this habit of referring all the beliefs, as well as all the precepts and principles of life and conduct, to known and intelligible laws, both in the physical and in the spiritual world, is a habit which comes out more and more distinctly the more we analyze the sources of their majesty and power. Our Lord's parables are full of this idea, and many of them are wholly based upon it. The commonest phenomena of external Nature, and the most ordinary transactions of human life, are the sources of illustration continually taken. Above all, the stress laid by the sacred writings on historical events, and the light in which they regard them as the result of causes under the supreme guidance of intention and of a righteous will, is full of the same system of thought. Even the Resurrection of Christ, one of the most central facts in Christian theology, although narrated as a fact, and expressed as such by the recapitulation of many 'infallible proofs[3],' is also represented as a result of causes which could have had no other

[1] Ps. l. 23. [2] Ps. xlvii. 11. [3] Acts i. 3.

issue. Christ is said to have vanquished death because 'it was not possible that He should be holden of it[1].' Although we cannot know all that was meant, or that is involved in this impossibility, it is at least instructive to note the assertion of it, and to think that our modern notion of the indestructibility of matter, may not be unconnected with the higher idea of the indestructibility of mind as the most necessary, and the most individual, of all existences. We know, at least, that the Resurrection of Christ was the special event which is described as being inseparably connected with the resurrection of His disciples—as having, for them, 'brought life and immortality to light[2],' and as having constituted our Lord 'the first-fruits of them that slept[3].'

Nor is it less important to note that not only the past history and the actual teaching of Christianity, were thus continually referred to the working of eternal laws, but especially, also, the whole of its prospects and destiny in the future. For just as Christ predicted that if He were 'lifted up from the earth[4],' His death would have such an attractive power that, at last, He would draw all men unto Him, so did His Apostle rest his confidence in his Master's final triumph, on that inherent and Divine power by which 'He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself[5].' On the other hand, St. Paul did not underrate the difficulties, both external or internal, against which Christianity had to struggle. He declared that it was

[1] Acts ii. 24. [2] 2 Tim. i. 10. [3] 1 Cor. xv. 20.
[4] John xii. 32. [5] Phil. iii. 21.

a struggle not against mere 'flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of the world, against spiritual wickedness in high places[1].' But he placed his confidence of ultimate victory on the countervailing power which lay in the very nature of the truths contained in the theology, and in the philosophy, of Christ. These he called 'the weapons of our warfare,' and for them he made the glorious claim that they were no mere mechanical or fleshly weapons, but weapons of a spiritual kind, and that by virtue of spiritual laws they would be 'mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ[2].'

There is no possibility of mistaking the spirit, and the significance, of this solemn and triumphant certitude. It is no reliance on any mere arbitrary or unreasoning authority. It is a reliance based on the natural facts, and on the natural laws, of an everlasting kingdom. It is an assurance that these facts and laws will, at last, make good their own dominion over the receptive, and subordinate, minds and hearts of men. It did not represent this consummation as immediate, or even as very near: 'But now we see not yet all things put under Him[3].' And yet the power on which the assurance rests, has been proved, and is as visibly at work as ever. It has already been justified by the disappearance of all the philosophies

[1] Eph. vi. 12. [2] 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. [3] Heb. ii. 8.

which contested the victory with Christian theology at the time when these words were spoken. It has been justified by the establishment of that theology over a large and ever-increasing portion of the globe. It has been justified, perhaps even more, by its power over the many individual souls who in all past ages have exhibited to the world something at least approaching to the complete dominion which it predicts. For in them, especially, the quality of its products has been seen. From them we can all estimate what the result would be if these comparatively few examples could be made to embrace mankind.

Nor is it less striking to observe that the theology and the philosophy of Christ have absolutely no rival now in the fields of thought. If Christian theology be not true, there is assuredly nothing to take its place, either in philosophy or in religion. There is no other name given under heaven whereby we may be saved from the blankness of universal scepticism. In this respect there is a sharp—almost a violent—contrast between the physical sciences, in which human progress has been immense, and what is called philosophy, in which it may almost be said with truth that there has been no progress at all. For more than 250 years, counting from Descartes to the present time, a series of great modern thinkers have again and again attacked the same eternal problems, with an interest which never—and with a success which always—fails. Not one of them has succeeded in raising any system of thought which is satisfying, consistent, or even, as a whole, intelligible. Three

words—three true though cruel words—sum up the general result of all of them—'Hitherto in vain.' These are the words—this is the verdict—not of any outside critic or historian, but of one of the very greatest of those thinkers himself. And he recorded it when considerably more than half of these 250 years had already expired. They are the last words of the great and laborious work of Emanuel Kant, published in 1782. Of course he did not mean to apply those words to his own philosophy. But assuredly we may now do so. He did apply them to all his predecessors. And when we remember the names of these, we can judge what a sweep is made by the words 'hitherto in vain.' Putting aside Lord Bacon as belonging to another category, we find that they would include the philosophies of Descartes, of Leibnitz, of Spinoza, of Locke, of Berkeley, of Butler, and of Hume. The same verdict must now be passed upon Kant himself, and upon all the lesser men who have succeeded him. Kant, like all the rest, had a wonderful confidence in his own course of dialectic. He called it, indeed, modestly, a 'footpath.' But he invited all men to walk on it with him until it should become a 'high road,' and he expressed his confidence that if this were done, then, even before the close of the century—that was, before eighteen years—men would be able to achieve what had been so long sought in vain—a satisfying solution of the problems which had baffled all before him. This expectation has vanished like a dream. Kant has been called, not a master-builder, but 'a shatterer'—a philo-

sopher who pulled down, but did little indeed to reconstruct.

And yet it would be ungrateful to deny that the metaphysicians have been of use. Like the ancient classical philosophers, each one of them has seen some bit or fragment of truth which he has done something to clear up, but which he has generally, also, ridden to the death. Each one of them has assailed the system of a precursor, and generally with at least some success. On the whole, the metaphysical attacks on the strongholds of Scepticism, have been far more successful than the like attacks on the foundations of Belief. Hume seemed to have a shortlived triumph. But he did not himself believe in his own results, and the fallacies of his system were speedily exposed. Thus the best thing the metaphysicians have done, has been to refute each other. Most of them have done good service in exposing some egregious fallacy, or omission, of their predecessors. And we must always recollect that this may be a service of the highest kind, because the detection and exposure of an error, may be, and generally is, the discovery or the vindication of a truth. There are many indications that Kant saw, and at moments deeply felt, the unsatisfactory nature of his own logomachies. In particular there is a noble passage towards the end of his *Critique* in which he testifies to convictions higher than those for which his own philosophy made any adequate provision: 'Reason,' he says, 'constantly strengthened by the powerful arguments that come to hand by themselves, though no doubt they are

empirical only, cannot be discouraged by any doubts of subtle and abstract speculation. Roused from every inquisitive indecision, as from a dream, by one glance at the wonders of Nature and the majesty of the Cosmos, reason soars from height to height till it reaches the highest, from the conditioned to conditions, till it reaches the supreme and unconditioned Author of all[1].' 'Inquisitive indecision' is an excellent phrase descriptive of the quality of his own dialectical results. A dream is a true image of many intellectual exercitations which seem real for a moment. But this passage amounts, in fact, to a great confession of the incompetence of metaphysics, and of so-called philosophy, to do the work which it has so often tried to do. It not only has done nothing to satisfy the affections, or the spiritual desires of men, but it has done nothing to satisfy the intellect. It leaves the philosophy of Hebrew and of Christian theologies, unchallenged and alone. That philosophy alone can say, and it has said to men, as the result of its teaching and beliefs, 'Wherefore—lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees[2].'

The still more recent, and the yet struggling philosophies which purport to be founded on the physical sciences, are obviously powerless for any constructive purpose. It is, indeed, only doing them justice to admit that they do not pretend to be in any other condition. They are generally content with the title of Agnostic. Their position is even worse than this,

[1] *Critique of Pure Reason* (translation by Professor Max Müller), vol. ii. pp. 535, 536.

[2] Heb. xii. 12.

for, as it has been well observed by a distinguished living critic[1], if the Latin equivalent for this word, Agnostic, were substituted for the Greek, it would better describe the real position of the negative school of thought. 'Ignoramus' is the correct word to apply to every system of reasoning which—as we have before seen—wilfully and systematically repudiates, or suppresses, the self-evident conceptions that rise, unbidden, through the continual and irrepressible evidences of human speech. The expedients resorted to in defence of this suppression, cannot be philosophically defended. In like manner, the dividing of the Universe into two sharply contrasted regions—one of them inside of Nature and the other somewhere above, but outside of it—is an operation of the intellect which is thoroughly unreal and fallacious. Then again, that no knowledge can be trustworthy unless it is complete, is a doctrine rotten to the core. If it were true, then all knowledge would be impossible, and no reasoning would be valid, because there is absolutely nothing in the world of which our knowledge is complete. All the other—even the most plausible—catchwords of the Philosophy of Nescience, are honeycombed with similar fallacies. That the Finite cannot understand the Infinite, is one of these. In a sense, undoubtedly, man is finite, but in a fuller sense, he not only understands the Infinite, but is utterly unable to understand the opposite. The Infinitudes of Space and Time are conceptions which

[1] *Religious Problems of the Nineteenth Century*, by Aubrey de Vere, p. 44.

belong to our very selves. The moments which we call Time are—so far as the bare idea of duration is concerned—nothing but samples of Eternity, and we cannot even think of them in any other light. All the great abstract ideas which are the warp and woof of our ethical and intellectual perceptions, are, without exception, in our apprehension of them, free from the limitations which belong to Place and Time.

And so, again, the almost universal tendency in modern philosophies to attribute to matter the functions and activities of mind, is a reversion to the worst characteristics of the worst of the old pagan schools. The oscillations which their language betrays between a reliance on mere Fortuity, and a despairing resort to Mechanical Necessity, are a sure indication of conceptions which are essentially unnatural, and as such are not less essentially irrational. And so, again, philosophies which pretend to be based on theories of Evolution, but which give no account of the previous Involution which must have gone before, are philosophies which stand self-condemned, as of necessity founded on less than half a truth. Nothing can ever be developed that has not first been enveloped—in a germ. From all these subtle but pervading sources of fallacy the philosophy of Christian theology is free. It everywhere rests on Nature as a word for one all-pervading kingdom, in which the reign of righteousness and truth will prevail at last, and in which that triumph is, even now, being visibly prepared. It uniformly condemns every artificial separation of the Here and the Hereafter.

And in this doctrine even the physical sciences are coming as supporting witnesses into court. Perhaps the most striking discovery of modern times, is that every physical element existing in the remotest regions of the visible universe, is to be found here also —in our own little corner of it. If ever there was a parable, this is surely one. What is true of the material, may well be true, also, of the spiritual, world. What is true here, and now, may well be true elsewhere and for ever. It impresses on us, as nothing else can do, the unity of the system under which we live. It seems most suggestive of the idea that everything here may well survive—excepting, only, those violations of eternal law which are the essence of what we know as Sin. It is an idea in perfect harmony with the theology of Christ, —with the doctrine that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us,—that here, and not elsewhere, all our faculties have their appointed work to do, in one service—which will be found to have been an all-embracing service, at the last.

But perhaps the greatest testimony of all to the supreme rank of Christian Belief as a system of philosophy, is in its evidently unexhausted reserve of power. The great things it has accomplished in the reform and elevation of human life and character, are little indeed compared with the results which it would obviously accomplish, if it were really understood, and if its dominion were thoroughly established. Christianity is infinitely greater than all Christians, and than all the Churches. Corruptions entered almost

at the beginning. Persecuting doctrines and practices have defamed its history, and the most hideous cruelties have been esteemed duties enacted by its commands. Yet every abuse of this kind is now seen to have been condemned by some one or more of its fundamental principles. And so it will be with every other abuse which may come to be detected in the course of time. 'O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken[1]'—these are the words recorded by the Apostles as addressed to two of the disciples by their risen Master. They are words which may well have to be repeated often to other disciples, from age to age, until that unexhausted teaching of His has come, slowly and gradually, to be better comprehended. Of no other teaching—of no other philosophy—can this be said. It, and it alone, among the many which have passed across the stage of human history, seems large enough to be capable of containing all the yet unknown treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Its whole spirit is the spirit of devotion to truth—to truth in conception—to truth in reasoning—to truth in conduct. It hates every form and shadow of untruth. It classes with the most hideous sins 'whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie[2].' It loves knowledge, and it loves the love of it. It sets before its disciples, as the greatest of all their rewards, the hope of 'knowing even as they are known[3].' It takes special note of the unsatisfied, and apparently unsatisfiable, desires of men, as a significant fact in their mental constitution.

[1] Luke xxiv. 25. [2] Rev. xxii. 15. [3] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Lucretius calls it 'the thankless nature of the mind,' and adds the beautifully plaintive line:

'Nec tamen explemur vitai fructibus umquam.'

With irresistible reason Christian philosophy correlates that fact with the inexhaustibility of the Creator's works, and regards this unappeasable hunger of the human soul as the natural result of the correspondingly immense capabilities of a creature made in His image, and always, in proportion to the awakening of its faculties, finding intense delight in the appreciation and understanding of His mind and works. The practical use it makes of this correlation, and the practical inference it draws, is the thoroughly intelligible and rational assurance that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love Him.'

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